

THROUGH THE LENS OF
FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGY AND FEMINIST THEOLOGY:
A THEORETICAL MODEL FOR PASTORAL COUNSELING

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ABSTRACT

Through the Lens of Feminist Psychology and Feminist Theology:
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This dissertation discusses the need for a new approach to pastoral counseling which utilizes feminist psychology and feminist theology, and proposes a model. Integrating research and theory concerning the psychology of women and their developing sense of self, a new definition of well-being for women living under conditions of patriarchy is compared to existing models which call for women to adapt to stereotypical expectations. Case studies of women clients and research on women's spirituality and feminist theology reveal certain common themes which appear to cross a variety of cultural, racial, ethnic and national lines.

These are then correlated with certain psychological attributes which women, as subordinates, are socialized to develop--especially those characteristics that have been devalued by society and need to be revalued in light of feminist vision for a just social order. Some common themes are the importance of interdependence, equality, mutuality, cooperation, connections, nurturance, embodiment, and relationship with the earth. Women's experience gives new definition and new value to these characteristics. Individual

psychology and feminist ethics coalesce in this model which relates particularly to women who are both oppressed and oppressors. It utilizes justice-making and right-relations as the ethical concern; and the well-being of women, men, children and the earth as the pragmatic norm for valuation.

Integrating feminist psychology and theology, a new model for women's spiritual journeys is described in terms of a tri-partite schema with each phase discussed in terms of the center, values, extremes, goals, illness and health, and God images and spirituality, along with issues for therapy. Women may journey through three phases. In the first two, cultural stereotypes are introjected and valued. In the third phase, women break out of patriarchal molds and define for themselves their values and sense of self.

Object relations and feminist family therapy are discussed as particularly helpful in facilitating women on their journeys. Using the latest research on formation and transformation of God images, issues of counseling women in the different phases and helping to transform their God images--to correlate with their emerging sense of self--provides focus and expertise to a theoretical model for feminist pastoral counseling.

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PREFACE

Feminist theology virtually requires that women's experience in patriarchal society be the foundation upon which we begin to fashion our thinking, speaking and writing about ourselves in relation to God/ess. Since researching and writing a dissertation requires such an enormous amount of personal time and energy, it seems fitting that one choose a subject which would, in a multifaceted way, provide some fulfillment for her heart's desire. A passion for feminism and fervent ambition to integrate two great interests--psychology and theology--fueled my intellectual drive to pursue such a topic. While a powerful motivating force, academic interest in itself did not provide all the energy. Clients, friends and colleagues cried out for representatives in the field of pastoral care and counseling to begin to fashion a focus for feminist pastoral counseling. Yet again, this is not the full story. In the long run I must admit to a more personal aspiration. As one who considers herself a deeply spiritual person greatly dissatisfied with many traditional and conventional ways of discussing and expressing spirituality, I had to work out my own salvation using new terms and new paradigms.

An avid reader in the area of feminist spiritualities,

I found myself in the stories of other women's journeys. Soon I began to sense a movement, a cycle of journeying, that could be discussed in terms of relative adaptation to (or revolution against) women's stereotypical role prescriptions. Three modes of being in particular kept emerging as themes of ways in which women breathed and moved and had their being in relation to prescriptions by dominant culture. These I named (1) female-identified, which is a degree of actual acquiescence to traditional stereotypical role expectations prescribed by dominant society for who a woman is and how she is supposed to behave under patriarchal expectations; (2) male-identified, or acquiescence to the stereotypical superwoman scenario prescribed for women of the eighties; and (3) woman-identified or self-identified, a mode of being and acting from one's own sense of self, women's culture and women-centered values.

It is extremely difficult to function with any consistency as a self-identified woman living under conditions of patriarchy. Women do not have unlimited choices and it is not simply a matter of making the right choices and doing the right thing. That is a far too simplistic notion, yet one sometimes espoused by humanists, self psychologist or cognitive-behavioral therapists. The givens and the contingencies of life, from early childhood experiences to level of economic power; from educational background to personal

support systems; from sexual orientation to color of skin--all function impact the process and the journey.

A personal illustration may give body to the complexities. Like many of the women I studied, I function in Phase III with most of my women friendships and in large part with women colleagues, though not always with authority figures. My personal primary relationship (marriage) can fluctuate among all three of the phases. As a child of the fifties, my dreams and fantasies often emerge with thematic and content material originating in Phase I ideology.

My work is decidedly Phase II, though I try to move into Phase III whenever possible. The task of writing this dissertation is a case in point. Because it has been impossible to separate content from process, it became impossible to write this dissertation in a linear, logical, rational fashion. Every part of my Phase II identity wanted to do the process systematically, furthermore, it was the only way I knew how to write academically. First I bought the book How to Write and Survive a Dissertation. Then I built my files exactly as the author prescribed. I set aside a space within my office devoted only to the writing of the dissertation. I spent at least the four allotted hours per day reading and researching the dissertation. I cancelled a global immersion trip to Palestine, Israel and the Occupied Territories last August so that I could dedicate myself to

the dissertation. But the more I progressed (moving logically, step-by-step, devoting so many hours a day to the project), the more my life became impinged upon by "outside," extraneous issues and the less I got written.

I became increasingly irritated that the contingencies of "the rest of my life" kept impinging upon my best laid plans of mice and women. During the summer, the air-conditioning broke down for two weeks at the seminary where I taught; later in the winter the heat was off for a week. I had no comprehension of my new computer and had to take "time off" to learn a whole new word-processing system and program. My children leapfrogged through the last two seasons with problems of allergies, sore throat, flu that necessitated weekly doctor visits and time off from work. Thunderstorms hit the DC area just when I was "on a roll" on my computer. Issues of relationships complicated the procedure as friends, colleagues, clients and students had particular needs. A central and well-known student on campus committed suicide, and my door became a revolving one with grieving students coming in one after another. Next a dear, bright, beloved student came down with cancer due to AIDS. Nothing seemed under my control. An article whose time had come needed to be finished for publication.

Finally it became impossible to write this dissertation in any way but following an intuitive, nonperfectionistic

plan. My inner muse and my faculty dean kept directing me to rough out the argument, wean myself from the books, stop researching and find my own voice, dig deep into my experience and into the vast files of images, client's stories, fiction writings, narrative, myth, symbol, knowledge of life and write from that. It was a barely new process for me and it came together in a birthing process that was agonizing, pushing me onward, sometimes protesting, sometimes in deep concentration; it came in its own time, hastened by deadlines, sometimes haltingly, sometimes with fluidity.

I didn't trust the process. The writing quality was not consistent. My children protested nearly every time I left at night or on weekends. The gut-wrenching goodbye scenes were too much for me and them, yet I couldn't get any work done at home. The solution was to move on campus for more undivided time.

Still, feminist ideals were at work. Others believed in me and in "the Process," encouraging a good-enough work. A research assistant often did more to give moral support than research although, since she could read faster than man or beast, she synthesized material right and left. Another faculty member shared her apartment with me and would call me at the office to declare she just happened to have food for two ready in ten minutes. A faculty secretary set aside time in her busy schedule to help edit the work on the

computer. I was overwhelmed and deeply moved by the caring of other people as I went through this process.

It makes thorough-going sense that the material and content would affect the process, for they are inseparable; but it was astonishing and dreadful, frightening and awesome, when it took wing and flight just when I was still back at the controls, trying to read the instruction by the book. In the end it was the deadline that drove me to write fast and furiously, serving in part to override perfectionistic and obsessive-compulsive demons that blocked me periodically, in part simply to drive my anxiety level to a height little known previously. I simply could not continue to compartmentalize my life in the way I seemed forced to do in order to get this done. Perhaps it is the patriarchal nature of the dissertation-writing task itself, perhaps it is the constraints we all buy into in the process, perhaps it is the overwhelming sense that such writing often ends up being such an individualistic endeavor. In any case, I hope that with my next large writing project I will discover more how it is I might function out of a Phase III mode of being.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

A model for feminist pastoral counseling begs to be written. Ever since women have entered the ministry, pastoral counseling has enticed them as a specialized form of ministry. Feminist pastoral counselors have been inventing parts of models all along and discussing them among their colleagues. Here and there, clusters of therapists have been sharing treatment plans, case studies and formulating theories and techniques on their own.

But long before that, women have been engaged in the practice ad hoc, counseling their friends, colleagues, children from a wholistic point of view, and talking about the spirit of God and how their peak experience in this life offers glimpses and visions of something deeper, more continuous, more numinous, yet nevertheless recognized in regular, simple, daily lives. Perhaps because of that, counseling ministries have been particularly appealing to women, perhaps also because the profession necessitates some of the socialized traits that come easily for women: listening, empathizing, caretaking, concern for others, making for right-relationships, empowering people to liberate themselves, soothing them in their sorrow, holding them like children and confronting them to grow up and act like adults. Sensitivity to the moods of others, reading body

language, subtle clues and integrating disparate messages are all conducive to good therapy. Historically, women are used to giving pastoral care without sacred orders, for traditionally women have been present with other persons, playing significant parts of major life transitions, helping other women get through childbirth, nurturing children, advising youngsters, comforting the grieving, taking care of the elderly, sitting with the dying.

Pastoral counseling as mode of therapy is especially appealing because it connotes a deeper level of integration of all the parts of the self than the purely behavioral, cognitive or psychoanalytic models may seem to do. Women who feel themselves to be deeply spiritual but unorthodox in their theology; who delight in discussing life in all of its fullness, surprise and mystery but may find that the language of institutional religions doesn't speak to them or that the Eucharist leaves them empty-handed; women who yearn for the richness of symbol, ritual and metaphor that accords them full respect and dignity but not the banality of organized patriarchal religion: these are often the women who go into pastoral counseling as a personal therapy of choice and into pastoral counseling as a specialized ministry profession.

Pastoral counseling holds the hope of integrating values of psychology and theology, but the problem has been that the values in both have been primarily androcentric.

In feminist ethics and feminist theology there emerge a number of new values which are predominant in the literature and affirmed by the experience of many individual women across spiritual disciplines and across the lines of race, ethnicity and nationality. These include mutuality, equality and a tolerance for diversity. They involve taking a strong stand on justice issues and fighting for the dignity and well-being of all people, in particular the poor and downtrodden people, the oppressed of all kinds. Religion around the world, however patriarchal, has often served as a creative source for women's individual and social struggle for freedom, and religious organizations have functioned to provide ways to channel women's desire and energy for doing good works.

We live in a patriarchal society. This means that every aspect of public and private life carries the mark of patriarchal thinking and practice and is therefore a necessary focus for revision.¹ Our society is structured to oppress women and uplift men; to oppress people of minority ethnic, racial and national backgrounds and uplift white, anglo-saxon, Protestant people; to oppress gay men, lesbians and bisexuals, and uplift heterosexuals. We look to the rich and upper classes to define what is American, which in itself is a misnomer since we in the United States should

¹ Thelma Goodrich, et al., Feminist Family Therapy: A Casebook (New York: Norton, 1988), 1-2.

define ourselves as being from the United States of North America. We get our values from media, television, popular literature, conventional cliches, stereotypical images, consumerism and popular culture. Our churches and congregations often function only to preserve and uphold the status quo, even when some of the social creeds and polity level declarations may call for a somewhat more expansive stance.

It is too late to deny the misogynist, anti-Jewish, exclusivist elements in the history of the Christian church and, once recognized, it is difficult to ignore their ongoing presence in tradition today. Efforts are being made on all fronts, by black theology, Minjung theology, Latin American theology, feminist and womanist theology to critique, deconstruct, reconceptualize and remythologize the tradition into a more inclusive, prophetic, justice-oriented theology. These theologies, by and large, allow for, even appreciate, diversity and pluralism, while attempting at the same time to re-value that which it has disowned and eschewed because it seemed foreign or female. Our Western God images are being redefined in terms of more wholistic, less hierarchical, less militaristic, less patriarchal images, and our conceptions more conducive to ecumenical and global dialogue. It is not yet certain that this effort at reformation will be, in the long run, successful. In the meantime, Jewish women, Christian women, Post-tradition

women meet in groups of exiles to define their own God/ess, their rituals, their liturgy and their values.

The hierarchies we have sustained in Western culture call for the ordering of male and female, adult and children, whites and people of color, culture and nature in such a way as to denigrate the later and deify the former. Our religious language sets up hierarchical opposition: sacred and profane, god and humanity, holy and earthly, spiritual and mundane. The problem for feminists has been how to reconnect these dualities in ways that preserve and value both sides without simplifying and distorting divisions which may be helpful for the sake of discussion, but oppressive when put into practice.

My methodology has a pragmatic norm. What serves to promote the well-being of women, children, men and the earth is of value; that which denigrates person and families, distorting their awesome singularity and destroying possibilities for self-respect, is not valued. As Carter Heyward writes,

Nothing is sacred if it serves to denigrate women, gays, Jews, Palestinians, blacks or others, or to secure the structures of oppression in the world and our religious institutions. Only a radicalized church will do, a church converted, a church turned around, a church denouncing much of its own history. This struggle will extend far beyond our lifetimes in this world.²

² Carter Heyward, "Is the Self-Respecting Christian Woman an Oxymoron? Reflections on a Feminist Spirituality of Justice," Religion and Intellectual Life 3, no. 2 (Winter 1986): 60.

Unlike Rosemary Ruether, I do not make the claim that the feminist vision of justice and equality is equated with divine will. Unlike Mary Daly, I do not correlate feminist knowing with ontological reality. I stand more in the tradition of Sharon Welch who, in developing her feminist theology for those who are in dual roles as oppressed and oppressors, bases her theology on the tension between nihilism and relativism on the one hand, and with the normative claim that a change in values and structures in society can transform society and end oppression.³ Carol Christ, in arguing against a thorough-going nihilism and relativity, points out that "truth may be relative, but we are relational beings, and in our lives there are relative truths." She goes on to report for her, as for many feminist theologians, "commitment to feminism does not have the same ontological status as commitment to patriarchalism."⁴ It seems to me, however, that the pragmatic norm is the best alternative to utilizing universal truth claims which we, as white women, ought to avoid, at least for the iconoclastic time being.

My philosophical stance is best described in this way:
I stand within the Christian tradition as a feminist who

³ Sharon Welch, Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: A Feminist Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985) 84.

⁴ Carol Christ, "Embodied Thinking: Reflections on Feminist Theological Method," Journal of Feminist Studies 5 (Spring 1989): 11.

utilizes a powerful element of ethical humanism.⁵ I, like Nelle Morton, consider myself a Christian because I have roots in the tradition.⁶ I find some of my story in the story of Jesus and his paradoxical maneuvers to affirm and liberate the poor and outcasts and overturn the structures of oppression. I find historical Christian ritual personally meaningful when practiced in particular liturgical contexts, specifically those which are inherently inclusive. Finally, like Heyward,

I stay [in the Christian church] because to walk away right now would seem to be abandoning a burning house with loved ones still in it. As long as I have breath and strength and desire to struggle creatively in the church (and I may not always have those things) I will stay to help extinguish the flames of injustice. I am enough of a political hardhat to want to use whatever leverage we have as a Christian voice to turn this nation around.⁷

Bringing the integrated resources of feminist psychology and feminist theology to pastoral counseling will radi-

⁵ In discussing a label for my philosophical stance, I approached a colleague, Roy Morrison, professor of philosophy and religion at Wesley Theological Seminary, and asked if I should describe myself as a neopragmatist or a philosophical nominalist. After an hour of discussion, he suggested the phrase used here as the best option.

⁶ In my case my maternal grandparents were reformed Jews, my parents philosophically Vedantist Hindu, my early Sunday school experience was at a Unitarian Universalist congregation, my formative adolescent years were spent in a UMYF at a liberal United Methodist church in Southern California, and I finally defied my parents and was baptized at Duke Chapel in my first year at college. See Nelle Morton, The Journey is Home (Boston: Beacon, 1985).

⁷ Heyward, "Is the Self-Respecting Christian Woman an Oxymoron?" 60.

Bringing the integrated resources of feminist psychology and feminist theology to pastoral counseling will radically enhance the field's ability to work effectively with women, children, and men in pastoral psychotherapy as well as in general pastoral care. This is because, like Labacqz's ethics,⁸ pastoral counseling can be theoretically focused and modeled from the underside up. If our focus is on the well-being and liberation of the most subjugated, then our whole vision and process of change is transformed.

Family therapy has been greatly impacted by feminism, and like most modes of therapy--from psychoanalysis to Gestalt to Jungian therapy--has been critiqued from a feminist perspective. The best and most empowering elements of the various therapies--those which cross cultures and cross genders--have begun to be discerned in many schools of therapy. Yet pastoral counseling itself in all of its eclecticism has yet to be deeply impacted by feminist theory.

It is my premise that feminist theology itself is deeply pastoral. Karen Bloomquist explains why this is so:

It begins with the concrete experiences of real human beings, not in order to apply timeless truths to their lives, but to open up a pragmatic inquiry that seeks to understand the pains and contradictions in those experiences. Something isn't right; relations aren't just. Because of the dissatisfaction with the "way things are," and the realization that androcentric understanding of the tradition have reinforced such, the interpre-

⁸ Karen Labacqz, Justice in an Unjust World: Foundations for a Christian Approach to Justice (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987).

tive task is approached with a bias to change symbols, consciousness, institutions, and structures so that they might better reflect God's gracious, just intentions for all creation.⁹

Therefore, feminism and pastoral counseling can come together and collaborate in ways that enhance each one.

Unfortunately, pastoral counseling, like the church, is too often a taillight to the major social movements which go on in secular institutions. Particularly because Judaism and Christianity, especially as interpreted through the lens of liberation theologies, offer some vision, hope and possibilities for overturning the status quo and for moving out in front in prophetic ways, the fact that pastoral counseling has yet to be impacted at the grand level by either feminist theology or feminist psychology is unconscionable.

A survey of the pastoral counseling literature indicates such a deficit. Journals in the field, such as the Journal of Pastoral Care, the Journal of Pastoral Psychotherapy and Pastoral Psychology, have published few articles centered primarily on the issues of pastoral psychotherapy with women clients, much less of feminist concerns.¹⁰ A major text has recently emerged pertaining to

⁹ Karen Bloomquist and Mary Knutsen, "Face to Face: Given Feminism, Does Theology Need a New Starting Point?" Word and World: Theology for Christian Ministry 8, no. 4 (Fall 1988): 374-77.

¹⁰ Two such exceptions are articles written by Carroll Saussy "Faith and Self-Esteem", Journal of Pastoral Care 42, no. 2 (Summer 1988): 125-37; and "Discovering Goddess," Pastoral Psychology 36, no. 3 (Spring 1988) 169-71.

cross-cultural issues,¹¹ though it refers to feminist theology only in a few brief paragraphs. Edward Wimberly's Pastoral Care and Spiritual Values: A Black Point of View,¹² was published in 1982 and has become popular as adjunct reading for students of pastoral care and counseling. Yet no such text has emerged combining issues of feminist psychology and theology with pastoral counseling. Among the most acclaimed writers in the field, it appears that only Clinebell in Contemporary Growth Therapies¹³ discusses feminist therapy in any depth whatsoever.

In other fields, feminists have made substantial beginning strides. Feminists in psychology and psychotherapy, theology and philosophy have begun to redefine broad theoretical, methodological and epistemological issues in their fields. The women's movement has challenged us to look anew at the feminine principle in history, society and religious thought. Feminism has challenged women in all fields to conduct our own research, to think broadly, boldly and creatively; to describe our own experience, transcribe our journeys, invent our own mythology and produce our own texts; to write our own theologies. Fields providing the

¹¹ David W. Augsberger, Pastoral Counseling Across Cultures (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986).

¹² Edward Wimberly, Pastoral Care and Spiritual Values: A Black Point of View (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982).

¹³ Howard Clinebell, Contemporary Growth Therapies: Resources for Actualizing Wholeness (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981).

underpinnings for pastoral care and counseling, such as psychology and theology, have begun such important feminist foundational work.

Additionally, in the past decade, feminist theologians and biblical scholars have been reformulating the formal conceptualizations of deity with regard both to language and to attributes of the deity.¹⁴ Many of these women have also paid attention to the psychological effects of the varied symbols upon women and men.

Feminists in the field of psychotherapy have pointed out the painful and detrimental effects which the wider system of patriarchy and subsequent gender role socialization have on women of today. Bringing an analysis of the cultural context into their perspective, feminist psychotherapists trained in a variety of psychological schools have critiqued and revised theory and techniques of psychotherapy according to feminist principles.¹⁵ At the same time, most feminist psychotherapists (with the exception of Ann Wilson Schaef, who critiques the church as authoritarian and addictive) have paid little or no attention to the issues of spirituality, the importance of deity image to the

¹⁴ See Sheila Collins, Rosemary Ruether, Carter Heyward, Letty Russell, Dorothee Soelle, Judith Plaskow, Mary Daly, Phyllis Trible, Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Christine Downing, Carol P. Christ, Nelle Morton, etc.

¹⁵ Eichenbaum and Orbach with object relations; Harriet Lerner and Jean Baker Miller with psychoanalysis; various feminist Jungians and Gestalt therapists; Miriam Greenspan with humanistic psychology; Betty Carter et al., with family systems.

client and the role of institutional religion in the lives of women.

From a psychology of religion point of view, object relations work has been done discerning the way rudimentary god images form in children with some suggestion as to their evolution and change in adult life. In this field, it has been generally accepted that parental relations pour form and content into rudimentary god images.¹⁶ Yet the literature in the field of pastoral counseling does not appear to take account of research dealing with children's and women's deity formation.

Feminist pastoral counselors (those with an interest and commitment both to psychology and theology and/or holding academic degrees in the field of integration of the two) are only recently emerging from their graduate studies and training programs. Therefore, many of their works are still in dissertation form.¹⁷ It appears that feminist pastoral care-givers, in general, are working more particularly on specific issues of feminist concern such as battered women,¹⁸ women as incest survivors, women who are victims of harass-

¹⁶ David Heller, Ana Maria Rizzuto.

¹⁷ Christy Neuger, A Study in Women's Spiritual Growth Using Psycho-Imagery Techniques, Ph.D. diss., School of Theology at Claremont, 1987 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1987); Valerie DeMarinis, "Critical Caring: Pastoral Care and Counseling Revisioned through a Feminist Liberation Perspective," TS, Berkeley, 1989.

¹⁸ See, for example, Joy M.K. Bussert, Battered Women: From a Theology of Suffering to an Ethic of Empowerment (New York: Lutheran Church in America, 1986).

ment and/or sexual abuse, etc. rather than at the broad theoretical level. There is a need for a more general theoretical framework involving feminist psychology and theology in the interface with pastoral counseling.

Recently anthropologists, social scientists and theologians have focused interest on the actual practical effects of symbols systems on the psyche and corporate response of all persons so influenced.¹⁹ Social criticism has enabled many persons to recognize that religion in large part not only supports existing social structures but is also in fact created in the image of such a society. Feminists point out the patriarchal nature of our ways of thinking and understanding, our linguistics as well as our institutions: educational, economic, religious.

Pastoral counselors need to be alerted to the theoretical and empirical research available with regard to feminist psychology, feminist theology and psychology of religion's research on the formation of rudimentary god images. Theoretical work needs to be done pulling together these issues with the aim of improving pastoral counselors' ability to work with children, women, men and families in the 1990s and on.

What I am proposing is a new understanding of what it means to be a pastoral counselor. Throughout the history of pastoral care and counseling, people have argued back and

¹⁹ Clifford Gertz, Carol Christ, Mary Daly, etc.

forth about what makes pastoral counseling pastoral, what unique gifts does the pastoral counselor bring to the counseling setting and the ways in which he or she utilizes specific "religious" tools for testing, establishing diagnosis, and conducting psychotherapy. There seem to be at least two streams of thought. One relies on religious terminology and focuses on the use of prayer, confession, scripture reading and the like to differentiate what pastoral counselors do that is different from other psychotherapists. A second school relies implicitly on providing opportunity for the client's faith issues to emerge and considers important not simply the religious techniques, but rather the undergirding theology accentuating human need for wholeness, meaning, depth and value. This dissertation adds another dimension to the definition of pastoral counselor: that she or he would be an expert not only in helping persons understand their faith symbols and spiritual journeys but would also become an expert in helping to facilitate transformation of the person's inner god images.

This study involves an integration of four general issues of tension that are critical to women, children and men in pastoral counseling at this particular time in history. As such, it proposes a theoretical viewpoint for understanding women's spiritual and psychological journey which is centrally located in tensions between the following as components: (1) feminist psychology and feminist

theology; (2) individual well-being and communal social justice; (3) god images and formal theological conceptions of deity; and (4) children's images of deity and the feminist vision, a possible meeting ground.

In summary, the central focus is on women's psychological and spiritual journey. A sense of urgency is implied due to the nuclear and environmental issues at hand at the present time. A preliminary attempt at a broad theory of pastoral counseling, consciously inclusive of all people and the environment, is crucial for this age. However, the environmental and nuclear issues will be left to be spelled out more completely by other writers.

Therefore, the premise of this dissertation is to work at a broad theoretical level of a suggestive nature and to spell out a theory integrating the most essential resources of feminist psychology and feminist theology applicable to pastoral counseling. I have relied on extant research and theory in the areas of feminist psychology and theology, including narratives of personal faith journeys published in the literature. In addition I have utilized my own case study material as illustrative of the thesis. A number of theorists are used in order to identify resources for theory-building, yet no one author provides the main focal point of the discussion; nor is any being analyzed exhaustively.

Feminist studies rely implicitly on the experiential; as such, this dissertation is based on all components of the experiential: intellectual research, psychotherapeutic work with clients, conversations with groups and individuals concerning women's psychological and spiritual journey. Lastly my work is based on my own experience as a white, middle-class, married, heterosexual woman, daughter of two academicians, sister to one brother, mother of two young children. I have drawn especially on the lives of women scholars of religion since their faith journeys are provided in Meadows and Rayburn's book,²⁰ and also because feminist theologians, true to their methodology, often give parts of their life journey in their books and papers. I had many more client journeys to report than space provided. I hope that this beginning model for a general integrated theory of women's journeys will offer a wide range of possibilities for subsequent theoretical and empirical research.

The dissertation attempts to redefine women's values, women's sense of self, and chart one model of women's spiritual and psychological journeys. In researching how the personal and cultural god images form and change, I was intrigued to put forth a theory on the ways in which both women's lives and women's personal god images might be affected through pastoral counseling. Feminist pastoral

²⁰ Mary Jo Meadow and Carole A. Rayburn, eds. A Time to Weep, A Time to Sing: Faith Journeys of Women Scholars of Religion (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985).

counseling is still at the stage of formulation; my hope is that this model may provide some foundational material on which to begin an integrated model, with subsequent discussion, reformulation and further theory building.

CHAPTER 2

Feminist Psychology: Defining the Well-being of Women

The Pastoral Counselor's Query

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the issues of women's health or well-being, examining a variety of terms for the preferred outcome of therapy--what it is women are trying to achieve through the experience of pastoral counseling. The first section states the overarching theme of why most people seek counseling in the first place. Second, a search through some cross-cultural metaphors for therapy will reveal whether this theme of well-being shows promise of commonality across the board. Next follow descriptive definitions of health and ill-health for women, coming out of the feminist psychology literature. Last, the criticisms of the terms well-being and health are that they are too individualistic for feminist theology's concern for social justice as identifying the integral link between the well-being of the individual with the well-being of others in a widening concentric circle of self in relation to others.

When an individual, couple or family comes to a pastoral counselor for help, the crucial question to pose for one's self is the question of "Why is this person coming to me for what reason at this time?" Who is the one

initiating counsel; and is s/he a spokesperson for problems in system wider than an individual? Why has this person chosen a pastoral counselor rather than any number of other professionals? The timing of the request for help gives a clue as to the most immediate precipitating event, even if the problem has been going on for a relatively long time. But perhaps the most basic question of all is the one of what is the problem at hand? Why is the person seeking help? Almost always, it is because s/he is in some degree of pain. Something is not right. Something is troubling. More times than not, clients have tried to alleviate the pain in a myriad of different ways but have found no lasting satisfaction. Except for the cases of persons who come to "find themselves" or begin a journey of inner exploration, (a financial and spiritual luxury for many), the occasion of an initial visit to a counselor is usually precipitated by some degree of discomfort and/or outright experience of pain.

Health and Well-being: A Common Theme

One way to determine if health and well-being are terms appropriate to the goals of counseling is to investigate whether literature on counseling across cultures might support this premise. Do these terms find wide usage in cultures beyond North American understandings of what counseling entails and promotes?

David Augsberger, in his book Pastoral Counseling Across Cultures, makes the point that there are numerous metaphors illustrating the purpose and process of pastoral counseling sessions.¹ Augsberger names eleven metaphors for psychotherapy that he claims are evident across cultures (have universal appeal) and he supports his argument with quotes from international psychotherapists and healers supporting each of eleven particular metaphors. Each metaphor relates to some aspect of therapy as a healing endeavor, utilizing the concept of pain or illness in some way. The metaphors described are hide-and-seek, choice and change, sanctioned retreat, teacher and student, scientific technique and skill, therapeutic communication, healing relationship, human transformation, the healing community, host and guest, and the wounded healer. I will discuss each of these briefly in terms of my thesis that health or well-being may be the best terms to include these many goals for therapy.

In hide-and-seek, Augsberger quotes Takeo Doi, a University of Tokyo psychiatrist, who explains,

When I say that the essence of psychotherapy is hide-and-seek, it is because the patient is induced to look for the secret of his illness, by the therapist. But since the secret of the illness, which they work together to find out, lies hidden in the patient himself, the psychotherapeutic hide-and-seek is really

¹ Augsberger, 346-73.

played within the patient. That is why it is so difficult and the therapist's help is needed.²

Clearly here Doi is talking about the issue of health and illness as he uses those exact words.

A second metaphor comes from Jerome Frank in his book Persuasion and Healing. Augsberger points out that the issue of choice has to do with decisions which are difficult to make without guidance, implying that the choice involves some degree of discomfort in the equivocation. Change has to do with acquiring a new social skill, learning new ways of relating or resolving conflict; or with changing activities. This implies that the old ways of functioning are no longer yielding positive results and are somehow disruptive or empty, leading at least to a sense of being troubled by the status quo. In addition, Frank uses the word sufferer as the one who presents himself or herself for some relief through choice and change.

The sanctioned retreat is described by Augsberger as "a respite from life tasks, social accountability, communal expectations, and personal responsibility--to allow for reorganization of one's life process and reintegration of values."³ Using Talcott Parson's understanding of sanctioned retreat, he notes that a person may feel the lack of emotional energy and strength to perform a particular

² Ibid., 348.

³ Ibid., 354.

social role. Society labels this problem an illness--so retreat is sanctioned as appropriate for healing. It is possible for a retreat to be used in terms of "preventive medicine"--a time away before one actually breaks from the stress and strain of current social roles or burdens.

A fourth metaphor noted by Augsberger as universal is the teacher and student metaphor of education. Learning or relearning new skills or more appropriate behaviors or patterns of thinking (as in cognitive-behavioral therapy) are described by Augsberger as exhibiting "recognition that values, world views, belief systems, life goals and a sense of meaning are integral parts of each person's quest for health and wholeness," and as giving therapy a sense of being more than simply symptom-reduction.⁴

The fifth and sixth metaphors relate more to the processes of therapy rather than to the specific intent of therapy. The "experimental scientific model of technique and skill"⁵ speaks to the relative emphasis given to technical skill and efficacy of therapeutic techniques more than it refers to the goal of therapy. Nonetheless, it follows the medical model which connotes that an illness is to be treated. Augsberger notes that the primary pastoral concern is the therapist's uniting of being and doing in an "authen-

⁴ Ibid., 354.

⁵ Ibid., 355.

ticity of presence."⁶ Therapeutic communication is the sixth metaphor which notes that the exchange and correlation of meanings is a universal component of all therapy cross-culturally.

Augsberger emphasizes that the "healing relationship" is the most frequently used metaphor cross-culturally. "The emphasis on the curative power of the relationship has been strong in existential and humanistic approaches, but it is also present in differing degrees and diverse forms in virtually all healing transactions."⁷ Augsberger calls into question the universal efficacy of certain widely acclaimed therapeutic characteristics, namely the "much-researched trinity of warmth, empathy and genuineness," preferring instead to endorse E.F. Torrey's four universal ingredients for effective psychotherapy. These four are "a world view shared by therapist and patient," an interpersonal relationship characterized as "close," the patient's expectation of being helped and certain specific techniques.⁸

Human transformation is an eighth universal for cross-cultural counseling. Though the process of healing is described as an alternation within or a creative tension between a variety of experiential poles, the process is one

⁶ Augsberger, 356.

⁷ Ibid., 357.

⁸ E.F. Torrey, The Mind Game: Witchdoctors and Psychiatrists (New York: Emerson Hall, 1972).

of a "series of polar steps." Some kind of balance is achieved, for example, between the poles of self-acceptance and self-denial; the relative weight given to the specifics of the balance are culturally determined.⁹

The healing community is a ninth metaphor which also designates the caring community in reality: family systems, neighborhood groups, health care systems, committed support groups and worship communities. "The power of healing is owned by community" that nurtures (or impedes) humanness in every culture.¹⁰ This metaphor along with the eleventh one is deliberate in its understanding of relation of health or well-being, the latter being "the wounded healer" metaphor for the counselor as one-who-has-suffered being part of the relationship which heals or being the agent of healing. The tenth metaphor fits less snugly with the description of the goal of health as it is one called host and guest. The counselee in all cultures is the host and the counselor the guest because

it is the host . . . who owns the life story and the human experience that is shared in the counseling session . . . the boundaries, the center, the possibilities, the pain are all possessions of the host. . . .¹¹

⁹ Augsberger, 362-63. For example, he cites a process of healing that involves polar steps between seven paired opposites with the former, such as self-acceptance, being more valued in the Western psychotherapies, while the latter poles (such as self-denial) are valued more in the Eastern psychotherapies.

¹⁰ Ibid., 365.

¹¹ Ibid., 367.

In summary, it seems reasonable to say that the metaphors for counseling all include some elements directly or indirectly concerned with issues of pain, suffering, health and well-being and it seems appropriate to discuss a goal of therapy for women as being the achievement of healing or well-being. But this must be explored further with regard to some other parameters. Just what does it mean to say one wants to be well, and how does this term avoid some of the problems of some other terms, for example, wholeness or balance, centeredness or normalcy. How can the term health be inclusive of all dimensions of a woman's experience? If movement toward healing or well-being is one of the more universally acknowledged ingredients toward a metaphor for pastoral counseling across cultures, then a crucial starting point for the discussion of a feminist psychology of women is to discern a comprehensive definition and systematic description of health.

Definitions of Health and Well-being for Women

Choosing a single word to describe health for women today is problematic in itself. First, there are the difficulties inherent in four-way compartmentalization of the individual into the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual "parts of the self," with certain words more aptly describing one or two of those functions. Health is a word drawn primarily from medicine, connoting physiological

well-being, but it must be expanded to be inclusive of all of one's being. Mental health comes from the same kind of medical model, sometimes giving the illusion that to be mentally healthy means being able to think rationally, appropriately and logically, possibly meaning "not psychotic," although it may be a more encompassing term. Wholeness is a term preferred by pastoral counselors and other professionals in ministry as a word encompassing health or well-being in all four areas, including spiritual health. Wholeness as a metaphor served pastoral counselors well in integrating the various facets of one's being. Attempts to include wholeness in light of the functioning of systems have also been helpful. Yet, the problem with wholeness in part has to do with its very popularity and subsequent overuse. Also, some objections have been raised from the community of persons with disabilities with regard to such a metaphor. Similarly, self-realization and self-actualization are terms coming from the humanistic psychological sciences and are problematic for feminist discussion in that they may represent an individualistic notion of well-being. I contend that well-being and health can be even more inclusive and overarching terms than these others if connections are made explicit between the goals of feminist psychology and the goals of a feminist understanding of social justice.

Objections can be raised against the term health because of the implications of its most commonly insinuated opposite: illness or disease. For example, can a person living with AIDS still hope to attain well-being? Can someone with terminal illness still relate to the notion of health as a desirable and objective goal?

This brings us to the overarching issue of what persons in our society are in the position for normative declaration of who and what is desirable in terms of outcome of therapy. Clearly, delineating what constitutes health vs. illness and normality vs. abnormality involves the categorical, critical judgment made by certain experts in the fields of medicine, social studies and psychology. Therefore, in an official way, certain qualified professionals in a culture formulate and utilize a diagnostic, prescriptive and descriptive tool to aid them in deciding whether the behavior and affect of an individual member of society is healthy or pathological. A hierarchy is set in place whereby persons are judged with respect to a set of guidelines as to what is appropriate and what is inappropriate in a person's behavior, thought content and pattern and affect. The official standards concerning health and normality are related to the dominant group's opinion though the specifics may vary from culture to culture as well as from cohort to cohort over time.¹²

¹² Virginia Sapiro, Women in American Society: An Introduction to Women's Studies (Palo Alto, Calif.: Mayfield, 1986), 32.

Descriptions, Relativism and Particularity

Therefore, any definition of health, or any truth-claim about health at all must be seen as culture- and time-bound. As Sharon Welch has aptly discussed in her book, Communities of Resistance and Solidarity,¹³ each society has a regime of truth, a general politics of truth. Any truth defined by the marginalized cultures of society is either regarded as faulty by the dominant group or is simply disregarded altogether. This is the way in which nondominant groups are marginalized, silenced or defeated. From that observation, Welch challenges whether anyone can make a truth-claim in a universal sense.

Keeping that limitation in mind, this discussion of women's health must be defined as culture-bound and timebound. It is probable that the following definition and description of health for women relates most closely to white women of middle-class background and it may not speak to the experiences of women of color, to working class women or to women of other cultures. The women clinicians cited have stated that they have worked with women across the lines of class, race, and sexual orientation, and the discussion of what it means to have minority status could relate to other forms of second-class citizenship (such as being a part of non-dominant racial, ethnic, religious

¹³ Welch, chapter 1.

groups; or being a person with a disability, a different lifestyle, or an alternative sexual preference).

A recognition of commonality and difference among North American women in terms of psychological and spiritual issues will be discussed, and attempts are made in ensuing chapters to utilize material that is cross-cultural in terms of women's sense of self as becoming conscientiously woman-identified and acting out of that self-identification as the ideal for health or well-being. However, as discussed in chapter 1, special qualifications are in order. Too long have feminists described the experiences of white, middle-class, heterosexual women and presumed these to be somehow universal of women of all races, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations and classes. If the white women of the women's movement are learning anything today, it must be to be very circumscribed about our tendency to include others in our experience without proper testimony from those concerned. Too often we have appropriated theories and concepts coming out of other women's communities and called them ours because of the commonality of femaleness. Yet our dual role of oppressor and oppressed commands us to be even more careful about the contingencies of our universalizing statements. Therefore, no hasty claims are made that this overall model of women's psychological and spiritual journeys based upon this definition of well-being will relate to the experiences of all women. It may relate most

to those women who describe themselves as white, middle-class and heterosexual, living in the United States at this particular time in history--a transition time when roles are in a particular flux and self-definition is at a crossroads.

Therefore, in the final analysis, my choice for the best word for what is desired in most cases through pastoral counseling (health and well-being) and its ensuing description has been drawn predominantly from the writings of white, middle-class women in the fields of psychology and theology, particularly middle-aged women of the 1970s and 1980s. Jean Baker Miller, a psychiatrist of the psychoanalytic persuasion, uses the term "well-being,"¹⁴ while the Mud Flower Collective,¹⁵ a group of theologians, ethicists and seminary professors, uses the term "full personhood." Dorothee Soelle, a Christian feminist socialist theologian, has used the term "fulfillment," defining it as self-fulfillment of the individual found only in connection with the fulfillment of others.¹⁶

Well-being of Women: Going Against the Tide

Feminist psychologists and psychotherapists generally

¹⁴ Jean Baker Miller, Toward a New Psychology of Women, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon, 1986).

¹⁵ Mud Flower Collective, God's Fierce Whimsy: Christian Feminism and Theological Education (New York: Pilgrim, 1985).

¹⁶ Dorothee Soelle, Beyond Mere Obedience: On Being Christian and Socialist, trans. Lawrence W. Denef (New York: Pilgrim, 1982), 11, 15.

concur that, in order to determine the etiology of distress, any definition of health should include all facets of one's being and should examine the cultural situation in which one is raised and in which one resides. Therefore, strictly biological, intrapsychic or intrafamilial causes for disease cannot account for the fullest picture of women's sufferings, be they physical, emotional, mental or spiritual. The systematic look must be enlarged to include the societal influences upon gender.

Well-being is a term which need not be used in the individualistic sense but rather it could be used as a term connoting health in all spheres: spiritual, mental, physical, emotional or relational. In addition, the term need not be reserved for severe illness, for one who is experiencing problems in living could wish for greater well-being in her life. The term avoids some of the hierarchical insinuations of a quest for perfection or even a full self-realization (which can give a sense of once-and-for-allness in quality). Finally, health or well-being does not necessarily exclude a systemic connection. In other words, a recognition can be made that the well-being of one person is inherently connected to, though not solely defined by, the well-being of her friends, family, community, neighborhood in ever-widening circles.

In addition, any feminist psychology must take into account not only the possibilities for well-being as being

connected with one's relational life, work sphere, and cultural atmosphere and societal expectations; but also the knowledge that those very items can work against her, producing problems in living, in self-esteem, identity, etc. In fact it is that focus, the issues of living under conditions of patriarchy, that feminist psychology and feminist theology take so seriously as affecting the well-being of women in terms of our health in all realms of our being, doing and interacting. As Miriam Greenspan, a feminist psychotherapist, writes,

The problem is not that of female mental illness. The symptoms of such illness . . . are for the most part, the systematically socially produced symptoms of sexual inequality.¹⁷

The solution, according to Greenspan, is to become "woman-identified," which is "redefining and re-experiencing our authentic power as people. . . [to] redefine and internalize women-identified, rather than male identified, sense of femininity."¹⁸

The context for this feminist analysis of factors affecting women's well-being is an analysis of culture. Feminists in psychology and theology pay particular attention to the role of patriarchy in understanding women's distress and the prevalent disorders of women. The problems women have with living vary from culture to culture, and

¹⁷ Miriam Greenspan, A New Approach to Women and Therapy (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983), 7.

¹⁸ Ibid., 203.

present themselves in different ways depending upon certain historical contingencies. Therefore, society itself must be critiqued.

Teresa Bernardez¹⁹ has described four basic components of patriarchal culture to which feminists must pay attention in discerning their impact on women's well-being or distress. They are as follows: (1) the socialization of women, (2) the social status of women, (3) discrimination against women, and (4) biases that support inequality. The key element in these four is that all forms of oppression encourage people to enlist in their own enslavement. In the case of women, patriarchy leads women and men to devalue and discredit women's thoughts, feelings, actions and accomplishments, which inevitably leads to suffering.

The first component of patriarchal culture, the socialization of women, has to do with the way in which a culture socializes women into certain behavior patterns that the society labels as normal. Usually these are also named natural (often even ordained by the divine), so that any alternative behavior is labeled as deviant. Beginning with the well-known Broverman study,²⁰ much documentation has revealed that sex-role stereotyping is linked with mental

¹⁹ Teresa Bernardez, "Prevalent Disorders of Women: Attempts toward a Different Understanding and Treatment," Journal of Women and Therapy 3, nos. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 1984): 18-20.

²⁰ I.K. Broverman et al., "Sex-role Stereotypes and Clinical Judgments of Mental Health," Journal of Social Issues 28 (1972): 59-78.

health standards. In that study, researchers found that mental health clinicians rated healthy women differently from healthy men; healthy women were seen as:

more submissive, less independent, less adventurous, more easily influenced, less aggressive, less competitive, more excitable in minor crises, having their feelings more easily hurt, being more emotional, more conceited about their appearance, less objective, and disliking math and science.²¹

The study also correlated adult mental health with characteristics identified with the mentally healthy male; the mentally healthy female was less healthy by definition.

Phyllis Chesler expounded on these and other issues in her classic book about women's dissatisfactions with psychiatry and psychotherapy as traditionally practiced at that time.²²

Keller has described how the traditional female sex role has been defined in terms of six trends.²³ First, females are socialized to concentrate on marriage, home and children as the primary locus of feminine concern. Second, reliance on a male provider for sustenance and status is encouraged (such as taking the husband's name and sharing in his particular social class). Third, women are expected to be involved in the nurturing and life-preserving activities best circumscribed in the role of mother, teacher or nurse.

²¹ Ibid., 4.

²² Phyllis Chesler, Women and Madness (New York: Doubleday, 1972).

²³ Suzanne Keller, "The Female Role: Constants and Change," Women in Therapy, eds. Violet Franks and Vasanti Burle (New York: Brunner Mazel, 1974), 411-34.

Fourth, women are to live through and for others rather than for themselves. Fifth, there is a stress on beauty, personal adornment and eroticism. Last, expression of direct assertion, aggression and power strivings, except in hearth and home, is banned. A similar ban exists disallowing direct sexual initiative, but not indirect initiative.

The emotional results of this inculcation into the traditional female sex role, as described by David²⁴ and Gove and Tudor,²⁵ include frustration, ambivalence and self-doubt. Similarly, Bem has catalogued the psychological effects of traditional sex role conscription, listing high anxiety, low self-esteem, low social acceptance, lower overall intelligence, lower creativity and lower ego strength.²⁶

Bernardez expounds on these basic issues of the etiology of distress in women from the point of view of socialization.²⁷ She points out that women are socialized in ways that make them particularly likely to develop certain troubles.

These finds do not deny a biological basis for differ-

²⁴ Sara David, "Emotional Self-defense Groups for Women," Women Look at Psychiatry, eds. Dorothy Smith and Sara David (Vancouver: Press Gang, 1975), 173-81.

²⁵ Walter Gove and Jeanette Tudor, "Adult Sex Roles and Mental Illness," Changing Women in a Changing Society, ed. Joan Huber (New York: Brunner Mazel, 1973), 411-34.

²⁶ Sandra Bem, "Sex Role Adaptability: One Consequence of Psychological Androgyny," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 31, no. 4 (1975): 634-43.

²⁷ Bernardez, 19.

ences between the sexes; rather, feminists in mental health fields focus on the so-called "feminine" characteristics of women that are specifically "acquired through socialization and the interplay of complex forces in the environment."²⁸ For instance, depression may relate directly to the imposed societal prescription that a woman be at service to others rather than herself and others, or "herself-in-relation to others" as described by Carol Gilligan.²⁹ Also, the strong discouragement and punishment of women's aggressiveness can mean that any kind of activity carried out on behalf of one's self, as well as any expression of "negative emotions" (such as anger, rebellion, criticism or displeasure) can result in the denial or repression of such feelings. If a woman does go against the prohibition, writes Bernardez, her sexual identity (or basic sense of self) is questioned.³⁰

This systems look into the etiology of women's distress is described aptly by Bernardez with the following metaphor:

If a woman is in distress and she has the privileges that culture decides are enough for her, she may tend to assume that the distress is her fault, that there is something wrong with her. One metaphor I use frequently is that when one has a pain in one's foot, one has to look at the size of the shoe one may be wearing. There may be nothing wrong with the foot itself, if the trouble is that the shoe is a size too small for it. In fact, after wearing shoes that are too small, not only

²⁸ Ibid., 19.

²⁹ Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

³⁰ Bernardez, 19.

will you have a pain in your foot (so something would be wrong with your foot), but also your foot may become deformed inclining you to believe that it is a problem of the foot alone. It is much easier to see the metaphor: foot-shoe than to see the metaphor: woman-family-society. But that is what we have to constantly keep in mind.³¹

Following socialization, the second factor affecting women's health is the social status of women. Clearly, despite movement towards the equality of women, the social status of women remains low. Ann Wilson Schaef calls this "the Original Sin of Being Born Female".³² Miller discusses this in terms of "subordinate status." Eichenbaum and Orbach call this women's second-class citizenship.³³ Susan Sturdivant states:

Not only are women at higher risk than men for role-induced symptoms, they are also at risk for psychiatric disturbance because of their relative powerlessness over their lives, which is presumed to be caused by their lesser, unequal status in our society.³⁴

According to Polk, there are six areas in which men have power over women: normative, institutional and psychological power; power of expertise; power due to their being

³¹ Ibid., 19-20.

³² Anne Wilson Schaef, Women's Reality: An Emerging Female System in a White Male Society (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985), 23.

³³ Luise Eichenbaum and Susie Orbach, Understanding Women: A Feminist Psychoanalytic Approach (New York: Basic, 1983).

³⁴ Susan Sturdivant, Therapy with Women: A Feminist Philosophy of Treatment, vol. 2 of Focus on Women (New York: Springer, 1980), 112.

allocators of rewards; and physical power.³⁵ Normative power means that:

because of their sex and their control of traditional sex-role definitions, men are able to manipulate women's behavior by ignoring, misrepresenting, devaluing and discrediting women and their accomplishments, especially when women deviate from traditional roles.³⁶

Institutional power refers to the differential amounts of "access to money, education and powers of influence and the use of this to limit life options for women and to extend life options for males."³⁷ Control of options through reward power has to do with men's "use of institutional and normative power to control women's choices" not only through restricting their options but

also through reinforcing choices within them . . . since women do receive some rewards for "appropriate" behavior, those who rebel risk losing real rewards.³⁸

By psychological power, Polk means:

Males, having suppressed feminine culture, have access to institutional power partly because they "fit" the value structure of the institutions better than do women. The confidence of being "right," of fitting, gives even incompetent men an important source of psychological power over women, who have not been so wholly socialized into the masculine value structure.³⁹

³⁵ Barbara Polk, "Male Power and the Women's Movement," Journal of Applied Behavioral Science 10, no. 3 (1974): 420-2.

³⁶ Ibid., 420.

³⁷ Ibid., 420-1.

³⁸ Ibid., 421.

³⁹ Ibid., 422.

And the physical power of which Polk speaks has to do simply with brute force:

Not only are most men stronger than most women, but they are trained to develop their physical strength. Men physically dominate women by beating them and by rape and threat of rape.⁴⁰

In response to these various threats and a general sense of second-class citizenship in patriarchal culture, women have resultant feelings which are described and discussed at length by Eichenbaum and Orbach.

Women do not feel whole; women do not feel confident in themselves; women feel less than equal; women feel like children, not adults; women feel powerless; women feel imprisoned by their anger by the clouds of depression that often surround them.⁴¹

Eichenbaum and Orbach go on to demonstrate that feelings of insecurity, unentitlement, abandonment, and anger are then "distorted and converted into feelings of competition, envy, guilt and depression which in turn lead to further self-condemnation."⁴²

Linked closely to these first two contexts, socialization and social status, as arenas out of which psychological distress arises, are two more areas. Bernardez names these discrimination against women and biases supporting inequality. Through discrimination, women become enlisted to see themselves as responsible for their lower

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Eichenbaum and Orbach, 139.

⁴² Ibid.

status, which then fosters even lower self-esteem, preventing them from realizing and utilizing their gifts and talents. "Discrimination relates to women's health because health," says Miller, "has to do with the kind of economic power women have, the kind of employment they have and the kind of education they can potentially acquire."⁴³ The biases supporting inequality are far-reaching and severe; they are shared by women and men alike, thereby further distorting assumptions about what women's goals ought to be, and further crippling women.⁴⁴

In medical terms, the prevalent disorders commonly found in women are agoraphobia, psychosomatic disorders of the genital/reproductive tract, and marital and family problems. On the rise are eating disorders (especially bulimia) and addictions. Most common of all, however, is depression.⁴⁵ Other researchers, depending upon their research and theoretical expertise, add more disorders to the list. Ann Wilson Schaeff sees codependence as a disease particularly exhibited by women due to their overarching concern for others' well-being without regard for their own.

⁴³ Jean Baker Miller, "Women's Mental Health Issues: Moving Forward with Awareness and Program Alternatives," Women and Therapy 3, nos. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 1984): 29-35.

⁴⁴ Anne Wilson Schaeff, Co-Dependence: Misunderstood--Mistreated (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986).

⁴⁵ Jean Baker Miller, "Women's Mental Health Issues," 31.

Miller sums up the transition time from the 1980s as one in which we have learned from new psychological theory that helplessness has a "devastating effect on health and mental health."⁴⁶ Women who feel helpless on all fronts--psychological, economic, social and political--feel they have no chance of influencing their environment (both life conditions and relationships) and may not recognize even the existence of their psychological resources. Miller says, "All mental health work, perforce, rests on the ability to elucidate and build on the person's existing or potential psychological resources."⁴⁷ This means that due to cultural forces women, according to Miller, will continue to fear their own effective words and actions; to lack skills and will to assert their own needs and thoughts; or, more extremely, to exhibit a complete loss of all recognition that each one of us has needs. Most basically, women have a "loss of the sense that we have a right to have [needs]--and to define them, to say what we believe they are."⁴⁸ She goes on to say that women today continue to have an exaggerated sense of inadequacy and self-blame, in spite of demonstrated effectiveness and worth, "even if they are doing very

⁴⁶ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 30.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

important things."⁴⁹ Patriarchy affects women adversely in the core of their being: their sense of self.

In sum, a feminist analysis of the health or well-being of women must examine closely the context in which women live. What all women have in common is that they live in a culture that is patriarchal. Rather than locate women's distress solely within the biological or intrapsychic system of the individual, feminist analysis, like family therapists, looks to the system in which the person lives. Feminist analysis uses an even wider lens for analyzing the context of an individual's problems. While family therapy looks at the wider system of the family of which the identified patient (symptom-bearer) is a member, feminist therapy examines, analyzes and critiques the role of the culture. Currently feminist family therapists are combining a dual approach.⁵⁰

Well-being in Patriarchal Society

Using a wide-angle lens, feminist psychology views the effects of female sex-role socialization, second class citizenship, discrimination and inequality upon women under conditions of patriarchy. Women are seen as social as well as intrapsychic beings in which the "etiology of psychologi-

⁴⁹ Ibid., 31.

⁵⁰ Several texts are emerging in the field of feminist family therapy, such as Marianne Walters, et al., The Invisible Web: Gender Patterns in Family Relationship (New York: Guilford, 1988); and Thelma Goodrich et al.

cal distress is related to social factors as well as internal conflict."⁵¹ In fact, internal conflict is directly related to social factors, as object relations psychology has pointed out so clearly. Women's psychological problems, claims Miller, are caused not so much by the unconscious as by being deprived of full consciousness. She says:

If we had paths to more valid consciousness all along through life, if we had more accurate terms in which to conceptualize (at each age level) what was happening, if we had more access to the emotions produced, and if we had ways of knowing our own true options--if we had all these things, we could make better programs for action.⁵²

How, then, is health defined positively rather than as the absence of symptoms? To describe well-being for women, Miller discusses such parameters as the fulfillment of the needs to express creativity, autonomy, interrelatedness, competency and some amount of control in one's life. She speaks of well-being in terms of self-assertiveness, ability to engage in direct rather than indirect conflict and the facility of demanding change in the environment.⁵³ If understanding a particular ailment can be seen, at least in part, as a symptom of a woman's adaptation to a world that has "pathogenic expectations," then being healthy has to do with countering those expectations. Authenticity, or being one's own person with the attendant capability and freedom to

⁵¹ Ibid., 94.

⁵² Jean Baker Miller, "Women's Mental Health Issues," 33.

⁵³ Jean Baker Miller, Toward a New Psychology.

define one's own experience and decide a course in life, is crucial. Health is an "open attack on the dominant's position of dominance and greater privilege."⁵⁴ Miller is under no illusions that the task she calls us to is a small one which can be done simply on an individual basis here and there, patchwork. Nothing less than the restructuring of society will render a community at-large which permits both the development and mutuality of all people. Values must change to allow women to move from a powerless and devalued position to fully valued effectiveness. To transform and restructure the nature of relationship in patriarchy is the goal at hand, "the first ingredient being self-determination and the power to make it a reality."⁵⁵

Feminists in the field of psychology have described ways in which women can move toward well-being while coexisting in a patriarchal society and working to transform it into a culture of mutuality. A phrase that has been used by feminist psychologists and feminist theologians to speak about the goal of self-actualization, or health and well-being, for women today is to become woman-identified.⁵⁶ This concept will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4. In brief, however, by moving toward self-identification, a woman

⁵⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 96.

⁵⁶ Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism (Boston: Beacon, 1978), xii; Greenspan.

becomes self-defined, which is quite different from being androgynous.⁵⁷ In choosing her own standards for who she is, a woman accepts herself with regard to her own and woman-culture values; her self-acceptance is not contingent upon patriarchy's approval, nor is her role defined by patriarchal expectations of her.

This is nothing less than a transformation of her sense of self. It means getting in touch with needs and feelings that have been buried deep within. It means defining one's own experience and one's own role expectations. It means naming clearly the expectations of the dominant society with regard to what is expected of "normal women" in today's society. It means looking seriously into the ways women have colluded in our own oppression by internalizing patriarchal expectations. Finally, it requires taking a critical look at the ways in which the following are internalized: submission; passivity; docility; dependency; lack of initiative; inability to act, to decide, to think; and immaturity, weakness and helplessness.⁵⁸

For Miller, the way to well-being means reclaiming "womanly strengths" and redefining them as important for the health of all people. She delineates five such strengths which need to be lifted up as strengths for all people and

⁵⁷ Described by Daly as "John Travolta and Farrah Fawcett-Majors scotch-taped together." Daly, Gyn/Ecology, xi.

⁵⁸ Jean Baker Miller, Toward a New Psychology, 29.

are especially needed in today's society."⁵⁹ The first is vulnerability, weakness and helplessness. By this she means that women show others that there is no "absolute invulnerability." Women's strength comes from their vulnerabilities. Women must give up their tendency to believe that they must have a strong man to turn to for help and security in life. Women must "give up the idea that men have a magical quality that men have and women don't." Health for women means keeping personal strength in sight.⁶⁰

The second has to do with emotions. Emotionality, part of what it means to be human, has been degraded in patriarchal society. It needs to be cultivated as a strength. Emotionalizing is humanizing our way of life, and women must get to know themselves and value their own experiences.⁶¹

The third strength is women's traditional participation in the development of others, such as raising children, teaching and counseling, and nursing and caring for the elderly. This work is devalued in society, while it is judged that men do the "real work." These tasks, and others involving caring for and nurturing others in healing and growth, need to be revalued as well as redistributed among all in society.

The fourth strength is cooperation, which replaces

⁵⁹ Ibid., 29-47.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 38-9.

⁶¹ Greenspan, 203.

dominance and competitive styles of controlling and distancing people. Miller defines cooperation as the bedrock of society, that which "enhances the development of other human beings while advancing one's own."⁶² She makes it clear elsewhere in the book that cooperation does not mean lack of conflict. She believes women need to engage in open conflict, assertively stating their needs and working directly to achieve self-determined goals, taking responsibility and authority to make changes. She distinguishes open conflict from closed conflict, the traditional approach favored by subordinates: manipulation, indirect approach, deception, covert action and stress placed on reacting to people and events rather than acting.

The fifth strength is that of creativity--creating one's own personhood rather than accepting the dominant's role prescription for women. This is what is described as "woman-identified" in Daly's and Greenspan's writings. In addition, creativity is caring for people and participating in their development (as in the third strength), which is enhancing to one's self-esteem.

Miller calls these strengths authentic strengths. Health means reclaiming authentic womanhood. One achieves authenticity through believing in one's need for other people and finding pleasure in receiving; it means authenticity through caring for others, in the interchange between

⁶² Jean Baker Miller, Toward a New Psychology, 41.

people. This is similar to the "agency within community" discussed by Gilligan, where agency means initiating activity, utilizing all of one's personal and relational resources. It means reclaiming women's sense of self and morality that Gilligan discusses in relation to issues of responsibility for, care of and inclusion of other people.

Moving toward well-being means acting out of a sense of one's own being, as self-defined, self-identified. It means empowerment and self-determination, a working out of one's own sense of integrity. Women who are self-identified, or woman-identified, are in the process of creating their own sense of personhood. Miriam Greenspan writes,

The essential task of any therapy geared to the interests of women as a whole has to do with helping women redefine and re-experience our authentic power as people. This means helping women redefine and internalize a women-identified, rather than male-identified, sense of femininity.⁶³

This must be done by helping women get in touch with their anger at being seen as the enemy of patriarchal culture, and with their anger at their own powerlessness. It also requires helping women to see the power they do possess--both individually and collectively. Finally, it means a sense of sexual authenticity described by Miller as relating to men out of a sense of one's own center, not expecting men to be all strong, without vulnerabilities themselves. It

⁶³ Ibid.

also means allowing one's self sexual pleasure rather than associating sexuality in general with degradation.

Women's Well-being: A Social Justice Issue

The symptoms of women's disease, according to a feminist analysis, stem for the most part from systematically socially produced symptoms of sexual inequality and powerlessness. The problem of women's mental health is the disease of society. The way to health for women is discovering how to be the kind of self one desires to be, a "being-within-relationship," able to value the very gifted parts of one's self as well as one's own perceptions and desires. One cannot do this alone, nor is therapy enough. Patriarchal society stands powerfully in opposition to women's authenticity. Therefore, women must collect into community. It is not enough for women to become better individually, as shall be discussed in the next chapter. There is no liberated woman until all women are liberated. Therefore, women-identified women will join together in cooperative action to transform and restructure the relationship between women and men in society, and to restructure the organizations and institutions--even to restructure the language and ways of thinking that perpetuate the hierarchical dualities by which some members of society are dominant and others are subordinated.

It is at this point that the issue of social justice becomes an imperative. If we are to take into account the

social origins of a person's pain, then the inequalities and oppression must be addressed. In psychology we are used to thinking in androcentric terms: that the individual woman (or man) can achieve well-being in spite of conditions around her. As Miriam Greenspan has pointed out in her book, A New Approach to Women and Therapy, the ways in which we do psychotherapy, from the psychoanalytic to the human potentials movement, have been based on the false assumption that removing particular blocks toward growth and whole-ness will lead to individual fulfillment. These blocks may be repressed memories, distorted thinking, habitual patterns of maladaptive behavior and so on, depending upon the psychological theory. Greenspan advocates that a comprehensive approach to the problems in living that persons bring to therapy will include some insight into how the client participates in her own subjugation along with how it might be possible to become involved in challenging the conditions of subordination. Rather than put emphasis on the traditional definition of therapy as a means to personal growth, feminist therapy is "considered a process of both personal and political growth furthered by an egalitarian relationship between women struggling to challenge their subordination in society."⁶ I would suggest that the struggle for well-being for women who are both oppressors and oppressed might have an even wider scope than the combatting of sexism.

⁶ Greenspan, 247.

It is the tenet of many feminists that the original oppression in history was the oppression of women. Gerda Lerner in her book, The Creation of Patriarchy, gives a convincing account of the historicity of female subordination. She contends that "male appropriation of women's sexual and reproductive capacities began prior to the formation of private property and class society."⁶⁵ Theologians such as Mary Daly and Rosemary Ruether also declare sexism the primary evil. Other scholars, such as Barbara Andolsen, reject the primacy of sexism over other oppressions, but still claim the right of white women to exercise the "moral right of self assertion."⁶⁶ Whatever one's starting point, it is clear in the literature that there is an interstructuring of sexism, racism and economic exploitation which must be addressed by both a feminist social ethic and a feminist theology of liberation.

Karen Labacqz gives an analysis in her excellent work entitled Justice in an Unjust World.⁶⁷ She presents a theory of justice not primarily based in philosophic reasoning but

⁶⁵ Gerda Lerner, The Creation of Patriarchy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 8 and chapters 1 and 2.

⁶⁶ Barbara Hilbert Andolsen, Daughters of Jefferson. Daughters of Bootblacks: Racism and American Feminism (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1986). See also a recent roundtable discussion centered around Andolsen's book, introduced by Renita Weems with respondents Linda Mercadante et al, "Racism in the Women's Movement," Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 4, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 93-114.

⁶⁷ Labacqz, Justice.

rather in the tools of social analysis utilized to discover the roots and workings of injustice.⁶⁸ Utilizing a hermetic of suspicion concerning Western philosophies with its attendant principles and laws which "court alienation and irrelevance", she calls for a new logic based in passion and involvement. "Above all, that logic must be a historical logic that attends to the history out of which current patterns of distribution and current decisions about action are taken." She quotes Pablo Richard as saying, "The rational element, the logical element, the truth element, is always that the people may live."⁶⁹

The people oppressed, according to Labacqz, are the ones to name their experience of oppression. Upon this basis she describes sexual injustice as rape, ethnic injustice as racism, political injustice as repression, economic injustice as robbery, cultural injustice as removal, verbal injustice as rhetoric and the whole web of injustice ruination:

Injustices feed each other. Political injustice reinforces economic injustice. Verbal injustice supports ethnic and sexual injustice. Ethnic injustice is used to undergird political injustice. The result is a web of injustice that

⁶⁸ In an earlier book, Six Theories of Justice: Perspectives from Philosophical and Theological Ethics (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), Labacqz critiqued the theories of Mill, Rawls, Nozick, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Reinhold Niebuhr and Jose Miranda. She illustrated how no single standard for justice was agreed upon for today because the theories began with a standard for justice rather than from the underside of history; the experience of oppression.

⁶⁹ As quoted in Labacqz, Justice, 55-6.

ensnares and destroys those within it. The result is the ruination of people . . . precisely the dehumanization of people . . . the humiliated human being.⁷⁰

If compassion is a basic human emotion with regard to the suffering of others, and if connection with others rather than alienation from others holds the key to a new way of relating to one another in non-dominant, nonhierarchical relationship,⁷¹ then the way to well-being is not concerned simply with symptom removal, nor with attainment of individual self-actualization or happiness, nor even for harmony among those most closely related. Moving toward health and well-being for an individual is intricately related with the movement toward justice on behalf of all oppressed persons. White women should not only affirm the self-determination of other oppressed persons but should also work with them as requested according to each group's self-defined agenda. However, since all "women must work,

⁷⁰ Ibid., 35.

⁷¹ These themes of individualism and commitment in American life have been the objects of great exploration by such writers as Robert Bellah et al. in Habits of the Heart (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), who ask the question of "how to create or preserve a morally coherent (private and public) life" and critique middle-class white American life for its emphasis on high individualism. Dorothee Soelle in The Strength of the Weak: Toward a Christian Feminist Identity (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), calls this new apathy and disconnection "religiosity rooted in banality." Ann Taves, "Theology, Gender and Individualism in America," World and World 8, no. 4 (Fall 1988): 343-48, points out that Bellah's work does not properly analyze gender differences in issues of autonomy and proclaims new value in the present women's movement toward autonomy and individualism, particularly as it relates to religious autonomy from patriarchal spiritualities.

struggle, or speak publicly on [their own] behalf,"⁷² the starting point for women who are both oppressed and oppressor may well be to work on our own individual self-determination.

Feminist spirituality and theology offer bridges between disparate groups of women and allow for an interactional model for understanding human interaction in the quest to overthrow structures of injustice and move the roadblocks patriarchal culture sets in the way of individual persons. It is embodied patriarchal culture which is fed and sustained by a valuing of abstract patriarchal principles that presents the problem for women living under such conditions. Christian feminist theologies specifically offer ways to reform and revolutionize the language symbols, metaphors, doctrines, rituals and dogma of the patriarchal church to open up ways in which the Christian religion might help women and other oppressed persons achieve well-being for themselves and their communities. The following chapter briefly describes some common themes of feminist spirituality and theology, addressing certain aspects of Western patriarchal religion which women have deleted, revised, reformed, revolutionized or reinvented so as to foster more

⁷² Heyward, "Is the Self-Respecting," 51. Also, Soelle, Strength, 93, states, "[women have] internalized patriarchy's prohibitions on thought so completely that they don't even dare to question them. Their lives are lived on someone else's terms. They do not know what self-determination is."

well-being for individual women and oppressed communities in general.

CHAPTER 3

Feminist Theology: Promoting the Well-being of Women

A Pragmatic Approach

As noted previously, several theorists have pointed out the dangers inherent in the quest for universal truth claims without the accompanying acknowledgment of the power of discourse. Nietzsche, Foucault and Welch, among others, have all endorsed the Enlightenment's concern for "the recognition of the historically situated and therefore relative character of thought."¹ The perspectival nature of any truth claims about feminism, about reality or about God must be underscored. At the same time, following Gordon Kaufman's position,² such claims can be judged as more or less true when "subjected to a critical and pragmatic analysis concerning the kind of life they permit or inhibit."³ This is the methodology feminist theology utilizes as it assesses religious symbols and theological assumptions of a

¹ Carol Christ, "Embodied Thinking," 7. In this article Christ is responding to Sheila Davaney's essay "Problems with Feminist Theory: Historicity and the Search for Sure Foundations" in Embodied Love: Sensuality and Relationship as Feminist Values, eds. Paula M. Cooley, Sharon Farmer and Mary Ellen Ross (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 79-95.

² Gordon D. Kaufman, An Essay on Theological Method, Revised ed. (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979).

³ Carol Christ, "Embodied Thinking," 11.

variety of religious traditions--a pragmatic norm concerning what promotes the health and well-being of women or, indeed, of all oppressed persons on earth.

Bringing together issues of psychology and theology, a pragmatist approach would evaluate theological presuppositions in light of whether they ameliorated women's condition and promoted equality or whether they contributed to women's demise or subordination. The pastoral counseling trainee is often asked to analyze a case study theologically and to evaluate whether a particular theological stance is helpful or hurtful for a client. In the same way, the practice of counseling can be analyzed in terms of its theological foundation. Good therapy must be good theology and vice versa. We have long passed the point of believing that there is any value-free counseling. For pastoral counselors, who are expected to be well-versed in the ways in which theology affects human beings and who are indeed expected to hold some a priori theological stance, the question is raised: what theology undergirds our counseling work? Additionally, what kind of theology would be most helpful for this person, for this family, for the world itself?

A feminist model of pastoral counseling begins by evaluating theology from the standpoint of whether a particular religious viewpoint or practice is helpful or harmful to women. The negative critique of religion (its institutions, practices and beliefs) based on practical con-

cerns was not created by feminists, but has a long history with representative figures such as David Hume, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engles, Sigmund Freud and Karl Barth.⁴ These "arguments against religion involve fairly specific concepts of human well-being and include concepts of deity as an object of attack," writes Paula Cooley⁵ and have centered around the psychological origins of religious need and manifestations of religion in its inhereents. For example, Hume noted that human fear due to inability to understand and control nature produced religion in humanity, and that it bred intolerance in adherents. Marx and Engels rejected religion because religious authority is utilized by ruling classes to justify economic and political exploitation of lower classes along with fostering ideologies of privatization and individualism. Freud criticized religion for fostering neurosis in individuals. Barth reproached religion since it functioned as the ultimate expression of human pride. In short, as Cooley writes,

there is much truth in the charges leveled against religion, namely that it arises from fear and promotes intolerance, that it justifies economic exploitation, and that it promotes escapism, irresponsibility, idolatry and false pride.⁶

⁴ For an analysis of negative critiques of religion, see Paula Cooley, "Power of Transformation and the Transformation of Power", Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 1, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 32-5.

⁵ Ibid., 33.

⁶ Cooley, 32.

If this is first acknowledged in terms of religion's role in human history, gender analysis can only serve to underscore these allegations when applied to women of all classes and races who have been the primary targets. Moreover, most critiques of religion have focused on a conception of deity as monotheistic, parental and patriarchal. These are in fact some of the very issues feminists have found problematic in their analysis of Jewish and Christian religions.

Another reason for the critique of religion has been the tendency of persons in power to define orthodoxy to the exclusion of other viewpoints. As Carter Heyward has noted,

fascism is steeped not in the dominant racial or religious group's acknowledgment of the limits of its particular historical experiences, cultures, or credos, but rather in the refusal of dominant peoples to accept the limits of their particular visions, values, and faith-claims.⁷

Many women have been reluctant to embrace fully the religious traditions handed down by patriarchal society, and are ambivalent about perceiving, interpreting or labeling their experiences as "religious"⁸ due to the above reasons. Nevertheless these same women have often been unwilling to abandon religion to the existing power structure (dominant

⁷ Carter Heyward, "An Unfinished Symphony of Liberation: The Radicalization of Christian Feminism among White U.S. Women," Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 1, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 100.

⁸ See Cooley, "Power," 22-4, 35, for a discussion of women's reluctance to utilize traditional religious categories to discuss their experiences, being suspicious that calling certain "root experiences" religious would not necessarily add anything to them, nor explicate them more clearly.

males in society). A negative critique of religion paints only part of the picture. Anthropologist Clifford Gertz, theologian Paul Tillich and psychiatrist Carl Jung, among others, have challenged theories of the negativity of religion, noting the power of ritual, myth and symbol in the life of community. Based on this challenge, Carol Christ further specifies that dominant patriarchal religion's influence on society is at fault. She claims that such religion perpetuates injustice and this "is the heart of the first feminist critique of religion."⁹

In addition, gender analysis in reclaiming women's history points to the ways in which religion has functioned, and is functioning still, as a creative source for women's individual and social struggle for freedom.¹⁰ In spite of the patriarchal nature of most of religion, time and time again women attest to the redeeming power of the tradition within their personal lives. This seems particularly true for black women--both African-American and indigenous Afri-

⁹ Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow, eds., Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 3.

¹⁰ See, for example, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza's In Memory of Her: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation (New York: Crossroad, 1983); and Fiorenza's "Women in the Early Christian Movement"; McLaughlin's "The Christian Past: Does it Hold a Future for Women?"; Plaskow's "The Coming of Lilith"; Mary Daly's "Why Speak about God?"; and Christ's "Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological, and Political Reflections"--all these in Christ and Plaskow.

can women;¹¹ in fact women have attested to the liberating, iconoclastic nature of Christianity as it has functioned as a tool of liberation in Latin America and Asia, despite the patriarchal contexts of those countries.¹² Finally, as Cooley recognized,

While there is good reason for ambivalence toward religion, particularly as it is manifest in the male-centeredness of many of these same confessions, there is little, if any, reason to trust secular institutions and exclusively secular solutions.¹³

Overview: Feminist Theory, Spirituality and Theology

As with any feminist theory and critique, feminist scholars in religion began with certain assumptions concerning the subjugation of women as disclosed in feminist thought. For our purposes, feminism can be described as

an affirmation of women's full equality with men, an awareness of the history of women's experience in our male-centered culture, an inclusive

¹¹ Renita Weems, in discussing the positive contributions of patriarchal religion upon women scholars, singers, activists, etc. mentions how important religion has been on their life and work, and in the sustaining of their hope: "Hence we find Harriet Tubman's not so latent identification with Moses, Sojourner Truth's unwavering trust in the male God of the Bible, and Sweet Honey in the Rock's musical preservation of black Christian theology." "Roundtable Discussion: A Vision of Feminist Religious Scholarship," Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 3, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 107. Also see Virginia Fabella, and Mercy Amba Oduyoye's book, With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988) which holds the writings of African, Asian and Latin American women.

¹² Rita Nakashima Brock, Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power (New York: Crossroad, 1988), xv. She asserts, "Christianity cannot simply be dismissed as hopelessly oppressive of women, unless all women are regarded as middle class and white."

¹³Cooley, "Power," 35.

movement of women and men who build a society and church which eliminate all forms of domination.¹⁴

This definition is helpful in several ways. First, it points to the need for an accurate understanding of the ways in which patriarchy continues to exist in modern form as an important backdrop to the creation of feminist theology. Historians such as Gerda Lerner, Zillah Eisenstein and Peggy Reeves Sanday have pointed out the importance of studying the history and development of patriarchy in order to better inform our theories of empowerment and to determine some vision as to the way ahead. Ethicists such as Beverly Harrison and Karen Lebacqz based their theory of Christian ethics upon the concrete reality of women's historical oppression; moving from that history to the stance that "any society has a positive moral obligation to support the conditions for women's well-being."¹⁵ Second, the definition above does not exclude men from the movement, and third, it focuses not only on the liberation of all women but also includes the eradication of all forms of human domination.

It is out of this understanding of the reality of history's detrimental patriarchal impact on women that it is necessary to distinguish between feminist spirituality and

¹⁴ Joann Conn, ed., Women's Spirituality: Resources for Christian Development (New York: Paulist, 1986), 2.

¹⁵ Beverly Harrison, "Our Right to Choose," Women's Consciousness, Women's Conscience, eds. Barbara H. Andolsen, Christine Gurdorf and Mary Pellaur (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 101.

women's spirituality. If spirituality is life-experience,¹⁶ then women's spirituality has to do with the ways in which women experience "ultimacy:" what are root experiences; what is most meaningful, most valued in life. The question then arises--in what ways are women's experience of life different from men? Certainly there are differences, but the argument is made that there are as many differences among women as there are between genders. Elizabeth Spelman in her book, Inessential Woman, writes about how feminist theory has made decisions about how to weigh the differences among women and whether feminist theory is recognizable at all if it forgoes describing the situation of "women in general."¹⁷

Rather than speak of women's spirituality, then, the focus will be on feminist spirituality, defined as that spirituality which is informed by the awareness of the "historical and cultural restriction of women to a narrowly defined 'place' within the wider human (male) 'world.'"¹⁸ In addition, feminist spirituality critiques women's subordination, views oppression as evil, and is dedicated to correct-

¹⁶ Conn, 9.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Spelman, Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought (Boston: Beacon, 1988). Her point is that it is impossible to separate gender from other issues of human identity, such as race and class; and that attempts to describe women's experience in general have led to the preservation of epistemological privilege held by white, middle class women.

¹⁸ Ann Carr, "On Feminist Spirituality" in Conn, 53-54.

ing the attitudes and societal structures that perpetuate this evil. To do this, feminist methodology is employed.

Feminist theory critiques patriarchy as an overarching system of exploitation interconnecting a variety of forms of oppression, namely of class, race, caste, color, ethnic origin or nationality and sexual orientation. Carter Heyward highlights the need for comprehensive systemic and structural changes in society caused not only due to the pervasiveness of patriarchy but also because it is multifaceted.

[The experience of domination and oppression] is more often than not the same economic interests, the same governmental interests, the same ecclesiastical interests, and the same special interest groups that line up against the revolutions in Latin America and Zimbabwe, against aid to the cities, against welfare and day care and the provisions for safe medical abortions, against gay/lesbian and women's ordinations, against prisoners in Attica and New Mexico, Joan Little, Angela Davis, black power, Native American grievances, and "communism," and against most if not all ecclesiastical change.¹⁹

Feminist methodology begins with the assumption that if religion is based on insight into our experiences,²⁰ then a religion or a spirituality developed out of partial exper-

¹⁹ Carter Heyward, Our Passion for Justice: Images of Power, Sexuality and Liberation (New York: Pilgrim, 1984), 113-14. Here she is making the connection between the oppression of gay people by North American culture and other experiences of oppression. She does not advocate an "additive analysis" of oppressions, however, saying that all the experiences of double and triple oppression are the same only more so. (See Spelman, 144-52)

²⁰ Carol Ochs, Women and Spirituality (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983), 9.

ience cannot be sufficient for a full humanity. To give a fuller representation of experience, feminist methodology begins with a conscious partiality rather than an "objective" (androcentric) research. Conscious partiality calls for the androcentric viewpoint ("view from above") to be replaced by a "view from below"--an understanding of experience from the viewpoint of those on the underside of history, rather than the dominant side. It is not merely an intellectual and conceptual endeavor, but it is a feminist methodology involved in praxis, participating in the struggle for conscientization and liberation; integrating the two together.²¹ Good scholarship, says Cheryl Gilkes, must not only be wholistic and inclusive (rather than eurocentric and classbound) but also it

begins with a spirit of rebellion and a potential for reform. Feminist scholarship in religious studies, with so many voices and so many critical targets, can, if it lives out its potential for interdependency and collaborative community, move beyond a reformist potential to revolutionary revelation.²²

Additionally, feminist methodology aims to uncover the ways in which the history of women as agents, not simply reactors, can be reclaimed. This calls for a different approach to the study of history, through asking a different

²¹ See in particular Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, "Roundtable Discussion on Feminist Methodology," Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 1, no. 2 (Fall 1985): 75-6.

²² Ibid., 83.

set of questions, looking in different places and accepting different, rather than conventional endings.²³

Finally, some good working definitions provide a basis for the understanding the differences among the terms religion, spirituality and theology. Religion, according to Emile Durkheim, can be defined in terms of its function in society as "the self-validation of a society by means of ritual practices and of myths that create meaning and integrate the society."²⁴ Thus, the question arises from feminist theory: which segments of society are represented by means of what rituals and myths to arrive at which meanings and integrations (or lack of it)? The answer, of course, is that, to varying degrees, predominantly white androcentric middle-class America is represented in North American Christianity. In order to add other dimensions to that representation, feminist spirituality may best be described by Ann Carr as a religious system "that insists on

²³ Ibid, 88. Respondent Anne Llewellyn Barstow points out "methods of women's history can cause a revolution," working to "criticize, shakeup and transform" by searching different areas of inquiry; the marginal rather than central spaces, inquiring about potential as well as actual achievement and looking for that which ended in obscurity rather than heroism and power, for example. Rita Gross discusses options for doing cross-cultural studies in religion given the fact that "due to the androcentric bias of scholarship, women's involvement in all religions has been ignored," calling for a clarification of the contributions of women as subjects in human heritage rather than objects in man's world. See Rita Gross, "Issues and Non-Issues in the Study of Women in World Religions," Anima 2, no. 1 (Fall 1975): 34-9.

²⁴ In Soelle, The Strength of the Weak, 17.

the power, value and dignity . . . of women."²⁵ Carol Ochs stresses spirituality as "insight" into the common experiences of humankind, leaving out any discussion of structures, doctrines and hierarchies of religion as a means to emphasize experiences of women that bring us "closer to reality."²⁶ Spirituality is larger than theology, encompassing "our deepest religious beliefs, convictions, and patterns of thought, emotion and behavior in respect to what is ultimate."²⁷ And while experience is stressed also in defining feminist theology, which according to Ruether is reflection on human experience in light of our relation to . . . the transcendent matrix of Being that underlies and supports both our own existence and our continual potential with new being,²⁸

generally feminist theology denotes the more explicitly intellectual pursuit of discussing spirituality.

Diversity and Prejudice Among Women:
Obstacles to Bonding

To speak of feminist spirituality rather than women's spirituality, is thus to narrow the field of focus from all

²⁵ Anne Carson, Feminist Spirituality and the Feminine Divine: An Annotated Bibliography (Trumansburg, N.Y.: Crossing Press, 1986). Her definition includes a notation that feminist spirituality sometimes insists on the superiority of women, and that its deity is female; so she is moving beyond the reform movements of Judaism and Christianity, focusing predominantly on thealogy rather than theology.

²⁶ Ochs, 9-10; 134.

²⁷ Anne Carr, "On Feminist Spirituality" in Conn, 49.

²⁸ Rosemary Ruether, "Feminist Theology and Spirituality" Christian Feminism: Visions of a New Humanity, ed. Judith L. Weideman (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 9-32.

women, to a particular interest in women's experience of spirituality as informed by conscientization of the dehumanizing factors of patriarchy, including not only calling for its demise, but a participation in the struggle to attain its overthrow. This can only be done through an experience of solidarity with other women. Before discussing the commonalities of women and the successes of women's bonding, however, it is crucial to note how it is that women's solidarity is not monolithic.

Recent attempts of women to come together to discuss places of convergence among the diversity of women have led to fruitful yet difficult interchanges. An analysis of the content and process of The Women's Spirit Bonding Conference at Grailville (Loveland, Ohio), July 11-17, 1982, gives an example of the monumental struggles involved in women's coming together from diverse backgrounds, representing different perspectives. The obstacles to women's bonding had to do with the variety of "isms" encountered at the conference.²⁹ These are also prevalent in attempts to find common ground across cultures. One of the major problems is racism,³⁰ in particular the dominant group's assumption that

²⁹ For an account of the content and proceedings of the conference, see Janet Kalven and Mary Buckley, eds., Women's Spirit Bonding (New York: Pilgrim, 1984). A discussion of the roadblocks to bonding can be found on pp. 358-62.

³⁰ For a discussion of the problems of racism and scholarship in religion, see Cheryl Gilkes in "Roundtable Discussion on Feminist Methodology," Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 1, no. 2 (Fall 1985): 80-3; Delores Williams, "The Color of Feminism: Or Speaking the Black Woman's Tongue," Journal of Religious Thought

women of a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds could be subsumed under their own category, an ignorance of the history of racism in the women's movement³¹ and in women's history, and a tendency literally to whitewash, as in make white, all others' experience. Specific issues include:

the assumption, often unconscious, by White women that their agenda has universal validity for all women; the haste of White feminists to underline commonalities and ignore differences in the experiences of White women and Women of Color; the inability of White women to hear the agendas of Black women, particularly their agendas around the Black family; the expectation that People of Color will take the responsibility of educating Whites, raising consciousness, identifying the problem, providing solutions, and above all, giving absolution; the reluctance of White women to accept Black leadership and the tendency to treat Black women as junior partners who are expected to defer to the superior analysis of their White seniors; the use of "plantation politics," e.g., playing one Third World group off against another--Blacks against Hispanics, educated Blacks against working-class Blacks, etc.; the failure of White feminists to make racism an explicit part of their

(Spring-Summer 1986): 42-58; and Audre Lorde's "Open Letter to Mary Daly" in her Sister/Outsider, 66-71.

³¹ Concerning the invisibility of black women's concerns in feminism, see Bell Hooks, Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism (Boston: South End Press, 1981); Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Scott and Barbara Smith, eds., All The Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave (Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press, 1982); and the Mudflower Collective. For a Latin American perspective, see Pauline Turner, "Religious Aspects of Women's Role in the Nicaraguan Revolution," in Yvonne Y. Haddad and Ellison B. Findly, eds., Women, Religion, and Social Change (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 321-49. For Asian women's perspective, see Rita Nakashima Brock et al, "Asian Women Theologians Respond to American Feminism," Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 3 (Fall 1987): 103-37. A collection of essays from radical women of color can be found in Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, eds., This Bridge Called My Back (New York: Kitchen Table, 1983), 63-101.

analysis, even when insisting on the interstructuring of the oppressions.³²

Other obstacles to women's bonding have to do with classism and imperialism,³³ homophobia and heterosexism,³⁴ and religious clashes, such as anti-Judaism.³⁵ Things that were taken for granted by most women at the conference, such as the quest for peace and commitment to nonviolence, were highlighted in terms of pluralistic and nationalistic biases, such as the differences between Latin American women and Ghandian Indian women.³⁶ Perhaps the most crucial outcome of this conference and an underlying theme of much of the literature contending seriously with issues of exclusion in feminism is the fundamental necessity of the freedom to name one's own oppression and to strategize for one's own solutions. For white women, both oppressors and oppressed, this means more than simply an affirmation of the interconnectedness, the economic interdependence of the various modes of oppression operating in the present time. It means to recognize and affirm the struggles of other groups for

³² Kalven and Buckley, 361.

³³ See Fabella and Oduyoye.

³⁴ In combatting these, see Carter Heyward, Speaking of Christ: A Lesbian Feminist Voice (New York: Pilgrim, 1989), or Audre Lorde, "Scratching the Surface: Some notes on Barriers to Women and Loving" and "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" in Sister/Outsider, 45-52.

³⁵ See Judith Plaskow, "Anti-Semitism: The Unacknowledged Racism" in Kalven and Buckley, 89-96.

³⁶ Kalven and Buckley, 14.

liberation. It also means to see all prejudice and oppression (not only sexism) as evil and morally reprehensible. It means to become aware of one's own complicity in the racist, sexist, classist, heterosexist, imperialistic society in which we live and to be determined to practice recovery. It means to teach the morally reprehensible nature of the prevalent attitudes of demeaning, expecting less from, and blaming persons on account of, their color, class, sexual orientation, gender and the like. The way beyond exclusion in sisterhood directs white women most radically to renunciation of the power and privilege of white supremacy. Speaking for herself, Barbara Andolsen, who wrote Daughters of Jefferson, Daughters of Bootblacks: Racism and American Feminism, says:

Black women determine their own agendas for liberation. Then, it becomes my serious moral responsibility as a white woman to affirm and support in concrete ways (involving time, money, power, and long-lasting commitment) their self-defined struggle, realizing that ultimately white women can be free and whole only in a community which supports freedom and wholeness for all.³⁷

In summary, much hesitancy can be employed in making grandiose judgments concerning any sweeping generalizations concerning what may be universal for all women. Upon what premise might we base any such judgments? Arguments have been made concerning biological differences between men and women, but given the need to eschew the biology-is-destiny

³⁷ Barbara H. Andolsen, in Weems et al, "Roundtable Discussion: Racism in the Women's Movement," 114.

argument historically so detrimental to women's equality and presently less and less critical given an ever-expanding technological society,³⁸ the biological premises can't be taken as the whole picture. Jungians have explained differences based on grouping some human traits as intrinsically female and others as intrinsically male (anima and animus) but this stereotypical position (or what is "eternally female" and "eternally male") has fallen out of favor especially since the publication of critiques of Jung's theory from feminist and cross-cultural sources.³⁹ We may be able to posit that women have more integrative skills and men more analytic skills, for example, without the need to propose a cross-cultural, non-time-bound transcendent archetype which makes it so.

Alternately, psychoanalytic and object relations models have been used to explain gender differences, in particular the works of Dorothy Dinnerstein⁴⁰ and Nancy Chodorow;⁴¹ yet

³⁸ Charlene Spretnak points out some of the biological sources of differences between the genders, citing neurophysiological research such as studies establishing that even at a few days old, female infants are more empathic than most males, in The Politics of Women's Spirituality (Garden City: Anchor, 1982), xiii.

³⁹ See Naomi Goldenberg, The Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions (Boston: Beacon, 1979); and Demarius Wehr, Jung and Feminism: Liberating Archetypes (Boston: Beacon, 1989).

⁴⁰ Dorothy Dinnerstein, The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Humar Malaise (New York: Harper and Row, 1976). She explains the origin of misogyny as due to the infant's primary experience with mother as bad object.

Chodorow;⁴¹ yet these put the issue almost solely on the basis of females' exclusive responsibility for child rearing being the primary caretakers of children--both posing as the solution shared child care by males and females. Although there has been wide acclaim for this work by the feminist community, critics charge that the one-pointed explanation for female and male personality structures as based solely on family arrangements cannot account for the differences without giving much more stress on the socialization provided by the wider society.⁴² An analysis based on the role of gender stereotypes held by society and the broad socialization of them not only in the home but also in the school, religious community, media, etc., seems to hold the broadest foundational explanation. The experience of living under conditions of oppression, stressed by Jean Baker Miller, yields a psychology of difference that is also helpful while not being monolithic. This approach to gender

⁴¹ Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mother: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

⁴² I personally was a strong fan of the Dinnerstein analysis before I had children. Having two children who have been parented primarily by their father over their youngest years and constantly trying to raise them in nonsexist practice, I find they are as "macho" and "feminine" as any other children and seem to view everyone else that way as well. In fact, my son depicts in his drawings a mother with fingernail polish, lipstick and a bow in my hair, despite all evidence to the contrary; and asserts that "daddy is the boss in the family since he is bigger and he cooks, cleans, does the yard and house work and takes care of the children." When asked what mommy does, he answers despicably, "reads, reads, reads."

differences would not necessarily ignore the role of genetic or biological differences entirely, nor underestimate the need for equal parenting by both genders, nor would it postulate a simply "additive" measure of oppression (black women are just like white women except that they are doubly oppressed; black lesbians' experience of oppression is not really different, it's just more so).

In other words, an attempt here is made to avoid the pitfalls of a total acceptance of a cultural feminism such as that described in Women's Ways of Knowing,⁴³ a feminism based on the unique femaleness or on characteristics of women that are unchanging and gender specific. Having stated that, can we talk in broad generalities about some overarching themes of feminist spirituality and theology? Even Elizabeth Spelman, a devout critic of "plethoraphobia" who shows us clearly how the phrase "as a woman" is the "Trojan horse of feminist ethnocentrism"⁴⁴ does not despair of doing gender analysis altogether, not because it is agreed that sexism is the root oppression, but because

⁴³ Mary Field Belenky, et al, Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

⁴⁴ Spelman, 167, points out the impossibility of dissociating gender from race and class at the same time as she notes how much more powerful it is to make claims on behalf of "women as a group" rather than "I as an individual." She criticizes Chodorow for analyzing only why men would be seen as superior to women, but not why some groups of men have more superiority than others.

sexism is an oppression that is societally structured and must be studied in conjunction with other oppressions.

Commonalities among Feminist Spiritualities

Given these issues, the literature on feminist spirituality and theology seems to coalesce around certain sweeping themes and sources, with different races, classes, ethnic groups and nationalities of women assigned differing relative values to each component. Nor are all these themes exclusive to feminist spiritualities, but may be seen in emerging spiritualities of liberation coming from diverse groups such as Latin American base communities or womanist ethicists. There have been attempts by writers such as James Cone and Leonardo Boff to include the experience of women within their thinking and writing about spirituality and theology. This points to growing understanding that theologies based only on androcentric experience, language and categories concerning both the human and the divine cannot be representative of full humanity.⁴⁵

In addition, differences abound among the varieties of feminist spiritualities. A distinction is made between those who would reform existing traditions and those who see no hope there and wish to create new traditions. Carol Christ has formulated a number of questions to help one

⁴⁵ See, for example, James Cone, A Black Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988), preface to the new edition; and Leonard Boff, The Maternal Face of God: The Feminine and Its Religious Expression, trans. Robert Barr and John Diercksmeier (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

determine whether one is primarily a reformer or a radical. Is it within the tradition or outside of it that one finds (1) more hope for change, (2) more room to impact, (3) more spiritual sustenance, and (4) change occurring more quickly? Are larger numbers of people hungering for non-biblical spiritual alternatives? Have the traditions done more harm than good to women? Are the "essential cores" of the Jewish and Christian faiths unalterably patriarchal or can they be changed to reflect non-sexist vision?⁴⁶ Well-known post-traditionalists are Carol Christ, Naomi Goldenberg, Mary Daly and Emily Culpepper.⁴⁷ Reformers are numerous throughout the literature by and about Jewish feminists and Christian feminists.⁴⁸

Carol Christ has formulated the above parameters to help people in making some distinctions and to aid in determining the reasons behind their choices. She also allows for a range of interpretations of history, seeing distinctions not as clear-cut divisive measures between reformers and post-traditionists, stating, ". . . a refusal to draw

⁴⁶ Carol Christ, Laughter of Aphrodite: Reflections on a Journey to the Goddess (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 59.

⁴⁷ See Emily Culpepper, "The Spiritual Movement of Radical Feminist Consciousness," Understanding the New Religions, eds. Jacob Needleman and George Baker (New York: Seabury, 1978), 220-34. Also see Carter Heyward's chapter, "Ruether and Daly: Speaking and Sparking," in Our Passion for Justice, 55-68.

⁴⁸ For a typology on differences in views on tradition and on god symbolism between reformers and traditionalists and among persons in each group as well, see Christ, Laughter, 143-59.

clear boundaries may be a virtue in a transitional phase of religious history that may result in the renewal of traditional faiths, the creation of new religions or both."⁴⁹ A good example of the ambiguity of the two categories, at least in effect, is shown in a story given by Gail Yates who taught a course on feminist spirituality at the University of Minnesota. Apparently at the beginning of the class, students divided themselves into three groups; "reformists," "post-traditionalists," and "seekers." The seekers soon dissolved, joining other groups. At the end of the semester the two remaining groups had a ritual. The post traditionalists went outside, formed a circle and chanted to the Goddess. The reformers also formed a circle, passed an apple and prayed to Mother God.⁵⁰

The most basic themes across the board in feminist spiritualities have to do with three basic categories: the role of women's experience, relationality and connection, and a reimagining of the sacred. Though these each have several subcategories, they all serve the purpose of revaluing women in order to restore dignity and to empower women. This is the heart of the matter and the central intersection of feminist psychology and feminist theology; both are interested in promoting the well-being of women. In so doing the enterprise is wholistic with the overturning of

⁴⁹ Ibid., 152.

⁵⁰ Recounted by Christ, *ibid.*, 58.

patriarchy as its end goal. This goal includes the uplifting of concerns for other oppressed groups and concerns with life in all its forms and the earth itself not as peripheral issues, but integrated into the whole interrelationship. Further explanation of the three categories is needed.

Experience can be described as "the fabric of life as it is lived."⁵¹ Kolbenschlag further specifies that feminist spirituality evolves from personal experience, especially when it is not normative.⁵² The question arises as to what constitutes women's experience. Christine Weber claims we must "trust our experience even when it doesn't 'make sense.'"⁵³ It may be particularly difficult to trust experiences that are "not normative" or that do not make sense. Moreover, which of our experiences is more trustworthy? And what happens if our experience of life as it is lived included some particular trauma or series of traumas (such as sexual abuse) that renders all later experiences "senseless" or twisted?

⁵¹ Christ and Plaskow, 7.

⁵² Madonna Kolbenschlag, Lost in the Land of Oz: The Search for Identity and Community in American Life (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 136.

⁵³ Christine Lore Weber, WomanChrist: A New Vision of Feminist Spirituality (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 12. For a critical review see Demarius Wehr's review in Horizons 15, no. 2 (Fall 1988): 419-20.

Women's experience in male-dominated culture is always shaped to a greater or lesser degree by androcentric language, norms, and prescriptions. Nevertheless, there are some ways of speaking about particularities in women's experience. Carol Christ distinguishes between women's traditional experience and women's feminist experience.⁵⁴ Feminist experience is the experience of liberation itself; that of recognizing oppression, confronting sexism in culture and institutions, and moving into freedom. This is the methodological springboard used for criticizing existing traditions by theologians such as Rosemary Ruether, Elisabeth Fierozza and Sheila Collins. It is feminist experience that is employed by Judith Plaskow and Mary Daly to construct new understandings of spirituality. Women's traditional experiences, primarily but not limited to the experience of being female-bodied, are also socially constructed but need to be revalued and reevaluated. Some experiences alienate one from oneself; some experiences though difficult and painful, may be transformative. Experiences that are life-giving and move in the direction of both a strong sense of self and a solidarity with others, could be said to have special value. Women, says Christ, "often live out inauthentic stories provided by a culture

⁵⁴ Christ and Plaskow, 7-9.

they did not create."⁵⁵ It is true that "women have not experienced their own experience."⁵⁶ To experience authentically, rather than through the shapings of experience given by male culture, women need to engage in storytelling, "which refers to all articulations of a narrative nature, including fiction, poetry, song, autobiography, biography, and talking with friends."⁵⁷ Margaret Farley sums up the role of experience for feminist theology;

Whatever else feminist theology does, it proceeds from methodological focus on the experience of women and whatever feminist ethics does, it begins with a central concern with the well-being of women.⁵⁸

Sources of women's feminist experience may be encountering the methodology of feminist theology; experiencing the exclusion and unmasking of beliefs and symbols and religious practices which foster the subordination of women. Another experience commonly valued is the felt realization of connection and interrelationship. For Ann Carr, Christian feminist theology draws on a "critical correlation between reflection on central symbols, doctrine, history and practice of the Christian faith" with "commitment to the women's

⁵⁵ Carol Christ, Diving Deep and Surfacing (Boston: Beacon Press, 1980), 1.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 1.

⁵⁸ Margaret Farley, "Feminist Theology and Bioethics," Theology and Bioethics, ed. E.E. Shelp (Norwell, Mass.: Kluwer Academic, 1985), 163.

movement and tradition of praxis and scholarship."⁵⁹ For Ellen Umansky the experience of Jewish feminists has to do not only with recognizing the received visions as incomplete, but also--even before reforming or transmitting those--the task is to conceive of visions, hearing one's own voice and finding one's own presence within the Jewish tradition.⁶⁰ Carol Christ cites the sources of her theology as found in her interaction with symbols and with nature, rather than as derived from tradition or scripture.⁶¹ Imaginative and unconscious material can provide experiences for women's spirituality, as Naomi Goldenberg, Nelle Morton and Monica Wittig have portrayed.

Traditional women's experience, as noted above, includes issues of embodiment; the affirmation and celebration of the human body as the locus for experience in the world, and the source of movement and action. Celebrating womanhood with all of its physicality counters centuries of culture's hatred of the flesh, especially the denigration and abhorrence of the female body. Penelope Washbourn has been a forerunner in articulating a theology based on embodiment, with her 1977 landmark work, Becoming Woman: The Quest For Wholeness in Female Experience, and subsequently

⁵⁹ Ann Carr et al, "Roundtable Discussion: What are the Sources of My Theology?" Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 1, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 127.

⁶⁰ Ellen Umansky, *ibid.*, 125.

⁶¹ Christ, *ibid.*, 120-1.

her cross-cultural research on pre-contemporary women which depicts how female spirituality springs from affirmation of female sexuality in all its seasons of change: menstruation, passionate loving and longing, motherhood or barrenness, menopause and aging.⁶²

This movement toward reclaiming the body has been formulated along two pathways. On the one hand, the women were reclaiming the importance of the body in the popular health movement of the early nineteenth century. But later, another strand of feminist thought, noting how cultural and religious traditions associated women solely as physical objects, even possession, moved toward rejection of this association. In claiming that anatomy was not destiny, stress was placed on women's minds. Elizabeth Spelman speaks of this as somatophobia, referring in particular to the writings of Shulamith, Friedan and de Beauvoir, and reminds us that it historically it has not been only sexism but also racism that has relegated persons to bodily status alone.⁶³ Farley takes a more benevolent viewpoint, writing that it was precisely the idea that women could transcend their bodies through rational choices that the paradoxical choice of revaluing women's embodiment became possible.⁶⁴

⁶² See Penelope Washbourn, Becoming Woman: The Quest for Wholeness in Female Experience (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977), and Seasons of Woman (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979).

⁶³ Spelman, 127.

⁶⁴ Farley, 172.

This feminist thread of reclaiming the body is one of many common areas shared by both feminist liberation theology and Latin American liberation theology. But for feminist theology, sexuality and erotic love are also reclaimed in all non-dominant, mutual relations, and sexuality is not dichotomized from "higher" or more "pure" embodiment issues (such as working for justice or practicing celibacy). As Heyward writes,

[There has been] a great divide between friendship and sexual love--between *philia* and *eros*. Most of us have been out of touch, from the beginning, with the eroticism that draws us into friendship with persons of both sexes. Our sexuality is our desire to participate in making love, making justice, in the world; our drive toward one another; our movement in love; our expression of our sense of being bonded together in life and death. Sexuality is expressed not only between lovers in personal relationship, but also in the work of an artist who loves her painting or her poetry, a father who loves his children, a revolutionary who loves her people.⁶⁵

Finally, the fact that embodiment is a crucial theme running through feminist thought is exhibited in a recent process of gathering papers for a book on feminist approaches to religion. Editors Paula Cooey, Sharon Farmer and Mary Ellen Ross solicited work from authors who were Catholic, Jew, nature mystic, agnostic and biblical Protestant, and the works included studies on women who were ancient Hebrews, early Christian, modern Africans, Europeans

⁶⁵ Carter Heyward, "Sexuality, Love and Justice," Plaskow and Christ, 295. See also Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," in Plaskow and Christ, 208-13.

and American. To their surprise, a "startling thematic unity" appeared among the essays' two interconnected themes: "the embodied side of human nature and the relational side of community, divinity and ethics."⁶⁶

Having summarized the first category of themes running across a variety of feminist spiritualities, i.e. that of primacy of women's experience with the attendant issues of unmasking patriarchal dressings, claiming authenticity of womanhood and valuing embodiment, we may now move toward a second major category: connection and relationality.

Feminist spirituality claims that all existence is inherently relational and interdependent. It seeks to avoid dualistic thinking which dichotomizes and splits attributes or matters into hierarchies, with the uppermost more valued and generally associated with maleness and the bottom level less valued and generally associated with femaleness. This predominant dualistic thought has manifested itself in traditional splits such as the following:⁶⁷

God	Humanity
Good	Evil
Angel	Devil
Above	Below
Adam	Eve
Male	Female
Yang	Yin
Soul	Body
Spiritual	Sensual
Light	Dark

⁶⁶ Cooley, Farmer and Ross, 1.

⁶⁷ Lists such as these can be found in many feminist writings, this one being predicated on the one written by Alla Renee Bozarth in her book Womanpriest (San Diego: Luramedia, 1988), 144-5.

Life	Death
Energy	Inertia
Creation	Destruction
Intellect	Emotion
Reason	Intuition
Motion	Stillness
Strength	Weakness
Generative	Receptive
Active	Passive
Order	Chaos
Culture	Nature
Infinite	Finite

Rosemary Ruether, Mary Daly and others have shown how, in Western philosophy and theology, women have been associated more with the second column, the more negative side of Platonic dualisms, with the body, nature and finitude, while males (and the male deity) are associated with the mind, the spirit, and the infinite. Feminists such as Carol Christ have called for a new reverence of that which has been devalued as feminine, including her emphasis on reverence for finitude.⁶⁸ Susan Griffin has called our attention to ways in which patriarchal society has linked woman and the earth to form other desperate subjugations of all of nature.⁶⁹ Griffin has pointed out that the way toward well-being for women (and men and children as well) is to seek the reunion inside us of nature, of desire, of sensuality, of change, of darkness, of death, of vulnerability, of receptivity, and of the child within. As may be readily

⁶⁸ Christ, Laughter, 213-27.

⁶⁹ Susan Griffin, Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature (New York: Harper & Row, 1981) and Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

noticed, these theologians are pointing the way toward a new psychology for the whole community as they describe the way ahead, in the same fashion that feminist psychologists seek the well-being of individual women. The parallels between theology and psychology in terms of what is valued for the way ahead are remarkable.⁷⁰

This intense desire to make connections instead of splitting and separating one thing from another is evident throughout feminist spirituality as relationality and connection become paramount values. Even women's spirituality is carefully defined not in terms of the otherworldly, but as holding a quality that "may be native to [women]," writes Marjorie Suchocki. She continues:

"this worldly" spirituality sees an ultimacy of existence in and through the world . . . it looks to the wholeness of things, that feels the relationality that binds the whole into unity . . . sky and earth, earth and sky in reciprocal importance.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Other recent articles concerning overcoming dualisms can be found in Ruether's work, specifically in Cooley, Farmer and Ross (eds.), Embodied Love, chapter 4 on "Spirit and Matter, Public and Private: The Challenge of Feminism to Traditional Dualisms"; and Paula Cooley's chapter 1 entitled "The Word become Flesh: Woman's Body, Language and Value," Embodied Love.

⁷¹ Marjorie Suchocki, "Earthsong, Godsong: Women's Spirituality," Theology Today 45, no. 4 (Jan. 1989): 393. An interesting comparison between the feminist spirituality of Suchocki and Heyward is that the former feels that "the inward and the outward are not opposed; to the contrary, the double terms are, like transcendence and immanence, each necessary to the other, leading to the richness of the other. There is a weaving of opposites in the fullness of spirituality, and whether one begins with a mode of outwardness or inwardness may be optional. Heyward, who discusses Suchocki's work in her "An Unfinished Symphony," would like to see Suchocki take an even more explicit feminist stand and Heyward places more importance on immanence of God rather than

Feminist theologies hold together equality and mutuality, autonomy and relationality, and over all, give priority to models of relationship characterized by collaboration rather than competition.⁷²

While many feminists are careful not to commit women to the closer connection with the earth (which Susan Griffin does assume) because of the dangers inherent in dualistic thinking which would then presume women's distance and alienation from ability for, say, rational thought, nevertheless many theologians are stressing the importance of all humanity reconnecting with the earth. McFague is one who finds this absolutely essential in a nuclear age.⁷³ Again, feminist theology and spirituality by no means corners the market on the theme of interconnection of people and the earth, rather it finds correlations with the indigenous

transcendence, preferring to caution us, "Don't be duped by folks who talk about 'God' all the time. It's more critical to make the connections among ourselves. And a hell of a lot more honest." (Our Passion for Justice, 52). In fact, Heyward makes a case for the inextricably connected acts of God and human beings in her work The Redemption of God: A Theology of Mutual Relation (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1982).

⁷² Farley, 165, 176.

⁷³ See Sallie McFague, Models of God: Theology for an Ecological Nuclear Age (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987). Other feminist thinkers are Ruether, who criticizes the "humano-centrism" of biblical thinking, calling for an embrace of all the living world; Ynestra King, "Making the World Live: Feminism and the Domination of Nature," in Kalven and Buckley; also see Mary Daly, Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Theology (Boston: Beacon, 1984); Starhawk, Dreaming in the Dark: A Rebirth: Magic, Sex and Politics (Boston: Beacon, 1982), and Starhawk, The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979).

traditions of Africa, Asia, America and Europe which have much to teach concerning overcoming dualisms.

Another connection not to be overlooked concerns the relationship between the past and present, between the individual and her forebears and culture. Paula Cooley points to the importance of bearing witness to one's own past and the peoples of one's past for the purposes of healing the present and "simultaneously bearing witness to the people of the earth."⁷⁴ She makes the point that to bear one's own story means to pick up where one's heritage left off and to contribute one's own ending--this is "to coparticipate in the creation and sustenance of value as well as meaning."⁷⁵ Part One of the anthology Weaving the Vision consists of essays all related to an understanding that claiming our heritage is our power.

Finally, in and through all feminist spirituality runs the common thread inseparably connecting issues formerly categorized separately by many orthodoxies: political action, social transformation and one's self-conscious spiritual life are all melded together in a seamless whole. Social justice issues are not separated from personal piety, nor is prayer from action, nor is psychology from spirituality. This is one reason it remains difficult for women to use traditional androcentric religious terms without proper

⁷⁴ Cooley, et al., Embodied Love, 24.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 26.

redefinition--often even with redefinition--for the words are too fraught with either/or issues: either personal salvation or community movement; present-concerned or other-worldly, transcendent or immanent.

Feminist spiritualities are, to a greater or lesser degree, interested in the patriarchy of God, Christ and the sexism of all religious traditions. Mary Daly has pointed out that if God is male, then male is God. Therefore inclusive language regarding not only humanity but also in terms of deity is a concern for feminist spirituality.⁷⁶ This is a topic for considerable discussion in Chapter Five.

In conclusion, feminist spiritualities are learning more and more to be increasingly tolerant of pluralism and contradicting viewpoints within. White women are beginning to hear the claims of women of a variety of ethnic, racial and national backgrounds to experiences which are different from white claims; to appreciate the diversity and broadness of feminist spiritualities as experience by women the world

⁷⁶ It must be noted that the Black church appears to find less offense overall in the maleness of God and Christ than those involved in white Christian feminism. This is because, in part, black women have found some solace in having a powerful male god who will right the wrongs in the end, and who represents them in power. See Dolores Williams, "The Color of Feminism," 54, where she describes differences between black and white feminists' priorities. She notes that black women liberators consider the following to be the most crucial issues for them: women's liberation and family liberation from white-male-white-female domination; also the redistribution of goods and services in society; encountering God as family (masculine and feminine, father, mother, and child); ending white supremacy, male supremacy and upper-class supremacy in all American institutions.

over. The feminist emphasis on web of connection undergirds the respect for difference that is a growing edge for white feminists especially with regard to the womanist communities.⁷⁷

To summarize, feminist psychology and feminist theology intersect at the pragmatic concern for the well-being of women. Both fields are interested in restoring the dignity and power of women, working for women's well-being and fighting oppression on a variety of fronts. Critical for the purposes of this dissertation is the sense that psychology and theology can be interconnected with an eye toward helping pastoral counselors help white women in particular, and hopefully other women of a variety of backgrounds in a new integration of what it is women might aim toward in their seeking for empowerment in their lives. A vision can

⁷⁷ The main problem, says Kelly Brown, theologian at Howard University, is that white women too easily coopt womanist theology and ethics in an effort to claim it themselves. This and other issues relating to the womanist debate were presented by Cheryl Sanders Brown and Diana Hayes at a weekend conference entitled "The Feminine in Religious Traditions," Howard University School of Divinity, 6-7 Oct., 1989. Interestingly, in a feminist theology course taught by Marjorie Suchocki at Wesley Theological Seminary (Spring 1989), the white students found themselves more drawn to the womanist writings than to the white feminist writings and several wanted to know if they could call themselves womanists. For more womanist theology and ethics see James Evans, Jr. "Black Theology and Black Feminism," Journal of Religious Thought 38, no. 1 (Summer 1981): 43-53; Jacqueline D. Carr-Hamilton, "Notes on the Black Womanist Dilemma," Journal of Religious Thought 45, no. 1 (Summer-Fall, 1988): 67-69; Toinette Eugene, "Moral Values and Black Womanists," Journal of Religious Thought 44, no. 2 (Winter-Spring 1988): 23-35; Kelly Brown, "God is as Christ Does: Toward a Womanist Theology," Journal of Religious Thought 46, no. 1 (Summer-Fall 1989): 7-16.

be articulated for a fully woman-identified woman who currently lives in a male-dominated culture and some articulation of the movement toward more empowerment and self-identification can be offered.

Christian Feminism: A Case in Point

Many parallels can be made concerning the common threads of feminist spiritualities and Christian feminist spiritualities and theologies. Once again the issues of reuniting former dualisms and revaluing those which have been associated (and therefore denigrated) with the female in society are important. Issues of detecting hierarchies, exploding patriarchal myths and dressings are critical. Relationalities and interconnections are paramount. The role of women's experience, especially women's experience of subordination and oppression han-puri⁷⁸ is hailed as virtually primary.⁷⁹ Here as with other feminist theologies, the questions are on a different order but not necessarily exclusive to feminist Christian groups. For example, questions are raised concerning whether Christianity can survive after Auschwitz and whether any Christology is

⁷⁸ Chung Hyun Kyung, "'Han-pu-ri': Doing Theology from Korean Women's Perspective," Ecumenical Review 40 (January 1988): 27-36.

⁷⁹ Biblical feminists appear to have a variety of different ways of stressing the authority of the scriptures in relation to contemporary women's experience. Feminists who do not describe themselves as biblical feminists find methodologies, interpretations and hermeneutics critical tools for dealing with the androcentric texts which put a greater or lesser emphasis on the Bible.

adequate and liberating after the genocide of six million Jews. The jury is still out as far as whether Christianity with its patriarchal, exclusivist and anti-Jewish plumb lines can be reinterpreted or recreated in ways which are liberating for the oppressed and call the oppressors to conversion or if Christianity as an institution functions only to support the status quo and the powers in place.

In contrast to post-Christians who have left the tradition, Christian feminists are seen as reformists--those who critique the past, recover lost history, revise categories and understandings of tradition, scripture, doctrine and institution of the church, basic creeds and symbols. Christian feminists are aware of the impact of patriarchal religion upon society and engage in an effort to change it: "We will either transform it into a new liberating future or continue to be subject to its tyranny whether we recognize its power or not."⁸⁰ Reimagining god as female is particularly important to Christian feminists as well as recovering traditions wherein women were prized as actors and agents rather than simply reactors. There are a variety of ways in which Christian feminists might be categorized as to their particular emphases and methodologies.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, xix.

⁸¹ Carter Heyward analyzes several white feminist Christian women theologians and their methodology in "An Unfinished Symphony." Reta Finger discusses a variety of feminist theological positions, their proponents, convergences and divergences, in "Your Daughters Shall Prophesy: A Christian Feminist Critiques Feminist Theology," The Other Side (October 1988): 28-41; while Carol Christ

Jean Lambert, in her analysis of four Christian feminist theologians' methodology makes the point that McFague, Ruether, Fiorenza and Heyward each base their hermeneutics and understanding of what is authoritative with regard to (at least) aspects of scripture on a pragmatic norm. For McFague the norm is "what liberates persons without making an idol of a humanly conceived god." For Ruether the norm is "what promotes the full humanity of women." For Fiorenza it is the liberation of women from oppressive, patriarchal texts, structures, institutions, and values; and for Heyward it is the "love of one's neighbor as oneself," acts of love being defined as making right relations or justice."

It is my understanding that feminist theology provides the best theological framework for discussing what is helpful and harmful to women with regard to patriarchal religions. Pastoral counselors must be about the business of determining whether a particular theology is helpful or harmful to the individual. In fact, this may be one of the unique tasks and a priority for the pastoral counseling expert. A pragmatic norm to be utilized is set forth succinctly by Chung Hyun Kyung:

If a theology untangles the Korean women's Han (oppression, suffering) and liberates us from bondage, it is good theology. If a theology keeps

develops an argument concerning differences and commonalities in Laughter, 135-59.

⁸² Jean Lambert, "An 'F Factor?' The New Testament in Some White, Feminist Christian Theological Construction," Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 1, no. 2 (Fall 1985): 93-113.

accumulating our Han and staying in our Han-ridden women's places, it is a bad theology no matter how important church unity, the authority of the Bible and church traditions are. If a theology has a life-giving power to Korean women and empowers us to grow to our full humanhood, that is good theology."³

Similarly a feminist pastoral counseling model would utilize this as a criteria for discerning what is helpful or harmful to women, and indeed to the plight of those doubly and triply oppressed without disregard for the care of the earth. While this may seem like an enormous task, we are given great help when we look closely at the common themes of feminist spiritualities and feminist psychology for guidelines of value. When attempting to assess a particular doctrine, utilization of scripture or institutional practice of the church, the question may be asked, does this promote the well-being of women and facilitate the liberation of the oppressed? With regard to white women the dual question must be asked: is this formulation a class-privileged solution and does it function to propagate oppression of other women and men of a variety of ethnic, racial and national backgrounds? In other words, how can we evaluate this particular stand from the viewpoint of feminist theology given a concern for the well-being particularly of women, but also of all suffering humanity and the earth itself?

It is impossible in the space provided to go into all

³ Kyung, 36.

of the different attempts to redeem Christian doctrine, scripture and practice, to reform or recreate it in light of these pragmatic concerns. One case in point may be in order. After having established (in Chapter 2) why a person comes into counseling (because of some suffering or pain) it might be well to discuss, however briefly, the issue of suffering in terms of Christian theology and the efforts made by Christian feminist reform-ists to come to a new understanding of suffering in light of feminist inquiry, a new understanding which could debate traditional notions which not only may not speak to women's situation, but also may very well contribute to our oppression. Such a topic is the issue of suffering. The methodology used will be the utilization of the pragmatic norm, for, as Brock has so clearly stated, "No feminist theology can afford to let the past [doctrine and traditions of the church] destroy the reality of our lives today."⁸⁴

Christianity has tended to glorify suffering, in part because of a need to see some redemption in what might be seen as otherwise needless and meaningless. When suffering is not relieved--and when one holds to an omnipotent, benevolent god who cares deeply for individuals as well as the human community, as god has been said to act in history--then Christianity is dealt the direct blow of the difficulty of making some "sense" out of why it is that innocent people

⁸⁴ Brock, Journeys, xiii.

suffer. The question of theodicy underlies most, if not all of the crucial issues of theology and has become an important part in reconstructing a feminist christology.

I propose to chart the way in which traditional Christianity has, based on the virtues of obedience to God, advocated self-sacrifice and attendant suffering and encouraged glorification of sacrificial love through the example of Jesus' suffering. I call into question common understandings of both the role of suffering in women's lives and God's role with regard to our suffering.

Dorothee Soelle, in an attempt to work through the oppressive aspects of traditions of obedience she inherited from her national origin (German), religious identity (Christian) and sexual identity, builds a strong case for moving beyond obedience in her book by that title. Utilizing Erich Fromm's definition of authoritarian religion, she views traditional Christianity's emphasis on the fatherly God's authority and his demanding obedience from his children as authoritarian. Soelle gives examples of how an acceptance of a superior power which controls our destiny excludes self-determination. She distrusts any subjection to the rule of this power since it calls for no moral legitimizing, in love or in justice, and she senses in it a deep-rooted pessimism about human beings who are thus depicted as powerless and meaningless individuals incapable of truth and love. Noting the effect this kind of theology has on

society and the enforcement of the status quo, she proves how implausible it is simply to reiterate that while it is wrong to be obedient to human masters, we can replace the masters with the Lord and all the parameters change. Rather than look to a distant God who exacts self-denial and sacrifice, we should find ourselves in union with God, being at one with what is alive. In this way we move beyond obedience to solidarity and resistance.⁸⁵

Soelle makes the point that for a liberation theology, self-sacrifice is not the key. For women, it is impossible to be self-sacrificing if one has not even attained any sense of selfhood due to patriarchal oppression. She points out that when a woman chooses to act out of selflessness, or performs altruistic acts, she never uses the term self-sacrifice but merely calls it giving; and it is done out of the richness of selfhood rather than the deprivation of it. Furthermore, such acts are done only in specific limited situations, and are performed by persons living in harmony with themselves, for "all sacrifices and denials which are consistently demanded throughout a person's entire lifetime give rise to inhumanity." Furthermore, the ability to postpone one's wishes is "part of what it means to be human," but this does not include renunciation of one's own life.⁸⁶ Too many times women have taken on the role of

⁸⁵ Soelle, Beyond Mere Obedience, xxii.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 38

martyr when they have no personal sense of being a subject in the first place. Authoritarian religion leads to "infantile clinging to consolation which . . . goes together with a compulsive need for order, a fear of confusion and chaos, a desire for supervision and control."⁸⁷

Christian agapeic love, held in high esteem as truly and fully self-sacrificial has been criticized by feminists, in particular for the way in which it undergirds social inequality. Theologians such as Valerie Saivings, Judith Plaskow, Mary Daly and ethicist Beverly Harrison all come together on this particular point.⁸⁸ Linell E. Cady continues the theme in her work, "Relational Love: A Feminist Christian Vision."⁸⁹ In it she suggests an alternative to traditional Christian focus on self-sacrificial love. Her premise is based on Beverly Harrison's point that "Literally through acts of love directed to us, we become self-respecting and other-regarding persons, and we cannot be one without the other"--and it is through acts of love that we "create one another."⁹⁰ Therefore, says Cady,

⁸⁷ Ibid., xiii.

⁸⁸ See Valerie Saving, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," in Christ and Plaskow; Judith Plaskow, Sex, Sin and Grace: Women's Experience and the Theologies of R. Niebuhr and P. Tillich (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1980); M. Daly, Beyond God the Father (Boston: Beacon, 1973); Andolsen, "Agape in Feminist Ethics"; and Beverly Harrison, "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love," Union Seminary Quarterly Review 36 (Supplement 1981): 41-57.

⁸⁹ In Cooley, Farmer and Ross, 135-49.

⁹⁰ Harrison, "Power of Anger," 47-8.

because we know love through the reciprocity and equality of friendship, we can extend our love to the wider community; and this love

is directed toward all persons regardless of their intrinsic worth or attractiveness. This disinterested or universal character of Christian love does not lead to the subordination of the self to all others but to an unceasing effort to include all persons in a reciprocal common life."⁹¹

She completes her blueprint for normative anthropology by calling for new images of god as divine spirit of love which motivates and empowers human beings--not "as the activity of an independent agent operating on or through human beings" (this is too mechanistic) but as a "unifying of being."⁹² Ultimately the deity symbol is an integrative process in life that empowers us to see more clearly and act more justly. This is not much different from what Heyward calls power-in-relation. In place of self-sacrificial love, Cady calls for a love "in which the primary aim is the creation, deepening, and extension of communal life."⁹³

Along similar lines, editors Joanne Brown and Carole Bohn compiled the book, Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique,⁹⁴ in part in order to take on the

⁹¹ Linnell Cady, "Relational Love: A Feminist Christian Vision," in Cooley, Farmer and Ross (eds.), 143.

⁹² Ibid., 144.

⁹³ Ibid., 147.

⁹⁴ Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, eds., Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique (New York: Pilgrim, 1989).

relationship between suffering and self-sacrifice and Christianity's attendant glorification of both. Throughout the book, writers struggle to give meaning to suffering without sanctioning suffering. Attempts are made, specifically on behalf of the well-being of younger women, children and the aged, to divorce divine will from violence and suffering, including the christological claims that the violent death of Jesus of Nazareth was the will of God. They make direct claims that theology has equated self-sacrifice with powerlessness and faithfulness which has encouraged the oppression of the powerless in society.

When the cross is also interpreted as the salvific work of an all-powerful paternal deity, women's well-being is as secure as that of a child cowering before an abusive father. Theological revolution is made all the more urgent by the daily suffering that theological metaphors of redemptive violence only encourage.⁹⁵

Extending this concept, Joanne Brown and Rebecca Parker present an analysis of the theology of the atonement and the ways in which such a theology makes violence seem proper, even commendable, concluding that glorification of any suffering is glorification of all suffering. They show how the three classical atonement concepts (Christus Victor, Satisfaction and Moral Influence) have been severely criticized by modern and post-modern theologians.⁹⁶ Subsequently,

⁹⁵ Elizabeth Bettenhausen, Foreword to Brown and Bohn, xii.

⁹⁶ Brown and Bohn, 4-13. Each theory of the atonement, though it may differ in terms of how suffering gives birth to redemption, commends suffering to the disciple. Each theory is examined for

they take up accounts of how modern theology has attempted to rectify these problems of victimizing the people. These are the theory of the suffering God, the necessity of suffering and the negativity of suffering.

Feminists have been drawn to the theory of the suffering God, which Ronald Goetz has called the new orthodoxy in the twentieth century.⁹⁷ For example, Kwok Pui Lan says it helps women in Asia relate to god, since their story is a story of suffering.⁹⁸ Similarly Karen Bloomquist writes of a God who "encourages us to resist patriarchy's deathblows, to stand on our feet, empowered by the one we know as Christ who identifies fully with us." To illustrate, she tells of a student who

describes in powerfully moving terms her experience of being raped, and as she lay there on the ground fearing that she would be killed, what flashed before her was a vision of Christ--of Christ as a woman--"because only a woman would understand."⁹⁹

It is not immediately evident to me how this image of a suffering god is helpful. Certainly a co-suffering deity is

the implicit meaning undergirding an encounter with suffering, and what each says about the nature of God.

⁹⁷ Ronald Goetz, "The Suffering God: The Rise of a New Orthodoxy," Christian Century (16 Apr. 1986): 385.

⁹⁸ Kwok Pui Lan, "God Weeps with Our Pain," East Asian Journal of Theology 2, no. 2 (Oct. 1984): 228-32.

⁹⁹ Karen Bloomquist, "'Let God be God': The Theological Necessity of Depatriarchalizing God," in Carl E. Braaten, ed., Our Naming of God: Problems and Prospects of God-Talk Today (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 45-60.

preferable to one who is impassible, immovable and untouched by human suffering; and co-suffering does imply deeply feeling and caring. But, as Brown and Bohn point out, it does not offer liberation to the sufferer, nor in Bettenhausen's words, does "misery loves company" suffice as a "basis for describing the ultimate power of life and hope in the universe."¹⁰⁰ In terms of women's experience, it is certainly comforting for women to be told they are not alone in their pain and suffering, that others are suffering too. However, what is even more helpful is when those very women come together in solidarity to do something to stop the suffering that results from evil.

A second major revision of the issue of suffering comes with some liberation theologians' insistence that suffering is necessary as an adjunct to social transformation. The point is that acceptance of pain and suffering ennoble the victim and calls for conversion in the perpetrator. Martin Luther King Jr. and Oscar Romero endorse this viewpoint that the very suffering of those who experience injustice will inspire the oppressors to change.¹⁰¹ However, the problem with this argument is that it asks people to suffer for the sake of helping the perpetrators of violence to see the sin of their ways and to move them to repentance and change.

¹⁰⁰ Elizabeth Bettenhausen in Foreword to Brown and Bohn, xii.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 20-1.

Instead of making the straightforward observation that those in power resist change by using violence to silence and terror to intimidate any who question an unjust status quo, these theologians are saying that suffering is a positive and necessary part of social transformation.¹⁰²

The third trend cited by Brown and Parker and the one that would appeal most to a working feminist pastoral counseling theology for women, who are both oppressors and oppressed, is the negativity of suffering. This position is held by Jon Sobrino,¹⁰³ William R. Jones and Carter Heyward. Sobrino's lighter critique of the cross is understandable in that persons who experience severe persecution (such as Christians are experiencing in Latin America) must find some hope and meaning to their suffering, but at the same time, sanctioning "the suffering and death of Jesus, even when calling it unjust, so that God can be active in the world only serves to perpetuate the very suffering against which one is struggling."¹⁰⁴

William R. Jones, author of Is God a White Racist?, takes a stronger stand. He critiques the whole suffering servant motifs which he sees as operative in many black justifications of black suffering. He calls instead for the suffering caused by injustice to cease, for the servant to be vindicated and suffering replaced by liberation. At the

¹⁰² Ibid., 21.

¹⁰³ Jon Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978), 373.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 23.

same time, however, he does not question the suffering that Jesus experienced, except to say that to glorify suffering is to perpetuate oppression.¹⁰⁵

Carter Heyward in The Redemption of God makes the farthest leap from traditional atonement theories. Unlike Rita Brock, whose christology emphasizes less the human Jesus and more the concept of the Christ which epitomizes heart, Heyward looks to the human Jesus whose death was an evil act done by people; it was unjust, unnecessary, violent and final.¹⁰⁶ She calls us to resist suffering, as Jesus did. At the same time, she resists calling God sadistic, instead saying that Jesus showed us the way of redemption by calling us to an intimate loving relationship with God, which is characterized by right relations with others; the power of justice-making in the world.

It is evident from this excursion into the theology of suffering, that for pastoral counseling purposes, there must be a theology which does not advocate any redemptive aspects of suffering. This does not mean that sometimes, in some places, victims might not be able to transform their experience of suffering into conclusions which are redemptive for themselves; certainly persons who have been victimized by injustice may need, after the fact, to find some value for

¹⁰⁵ William R. Jones, Is God a White Racist? (Garden City: Anchor, 1973).

¹⁰⁶ Carter Heyward, The Redemption of God, 54-57.

themselves in spite of or even growing out of their pain.

Nevertheless, the travesty of suffering must not be appeased by an appeal to anyone's redemption by and through suffering and death, including the suffering and death of Jesus. As Brown and Bohn point out in one of their conclusions:

We do not need to be saved by Jesus' death from some original sin. We need to be liberated from the oppression of racism, classism, and sexism, that is, from patriarchy. If in that liberation process there is suffering it will be because people with power choose to use their power to resist and oppose the human claim to a passionate and free life. Those who seek redemption must dare to live their lives with passion in intimate, immediate love relationships with each other, remembering times when we were not slaves.¹⁰⁷

In the end it is not acceptance of suffering that brings life but acceptance of life which brings life. Pastoral counselors best help individuals with suffering that is the result of injustice by helping them to resist injustice, by joining in the refusal to accept injustice and the refusal to support or maintain or undergird their own endurance of this suffering. An adequate feminist theology for pastoral care and counseling for oppressors and oppressed must search for adequate theologies which call for solidarity with the oppressed and resistance to oppression, seeking transformation for victim, perpetrator and society at large. Feminist spiritualities, and specifically Christian feminist theologies, seek to reconnect the dispossessed with sources of empowerment--whether they be individual,

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 27.

communal or the reinterpretation, re-creation or redemption
of symbol systems themselves.

CHAPTER 4

Women's Spiritual and Psychological Journeys

Intimate Connection: Psychology and
Religion in Dialogue

In the last chapter the point was made that feminist theology utilizes a pragmatic norm: it concerns itself with promoting the well-being of women, children and men. Indeed, it is an advocate for all life forms and the earth itself. These concerns go beyond simple equality of men and women but imply the "radical restructuring of institutions and a radical revision of religious doctrine and practice."¹ While feminist theologians and scholars of religion do not always allude to the writings of mental health specialists concerned with the emotional and psychological well-being of women, their recommendations for transformation of symbols systems and religious imagery, doctrine and creed are based on an effort to liberate traditional religions from what are perceived to be some of their most oppressive aspects and implications. Promoters and creators of radical feminist spiritualities have discerned that traditional religions are hopelessly patriarchal--that they are misogynist and exclusivist to the core--and no amount of reinterpretation,

¹ Farley, 170.

research or re-creation will be able to redeem them. In the case of Christianity, the accusation that Christianity has at its core anti-Judaism is another aspect disdained by post-traditionalists. Yet in both Jewish and Christian faiths some devout, resolute women and men have not yet given up the task of critique, deconstruction and reconstruction. It is far from evident that the efforts of such biblical scholars, historians, theologians, liturgists, etc. will prove successful in the long run, presenting patriarchal religions in new ways that render them more redemptive for women rather than oppressive. An additional issue is whether Christianity or Judaism will remain essentially Christian or Jewish after depatriarchalization.² Still the struggle continues on all fronts. This is because women and men, unwilling as yet to leave the congregations or the religious traditions of their heritage, are calling for such changes. The resurgence of interest in women's spirituality has provided a growing awareness on the part of clergy and laity alike in issues of feminist theology and spirituality. Burgeoning literature appears not only in the progressive

² Bloomquist, in her chapter "Let God be God," in Braaten, ed., Our Naming of God, 101, uses this term in the subtitle and throughout her essay. Certain scholars, foremost among them Ann Taves, have expressed their doubts that Christianity can progress as historic Christianity given the changes feminism demands, including a call for a female deity naming. However, Nelle Morton has argued at Claremont Graduate School Colloquiums in Religion that this concern should not have a high priority nor deter feminists from their work, whether it be renaming of the divine in female terms or forging ahead with other iconoclastic efforts.

bookstores but has even infiltrated mainstream (malestream) bookstores.

Because feminist spirituality begins with the experience of women, in particular their experience of marginalization and subordination, it addresses itself directly to the perception of self. Rather than perpetuate society's valuing the mind over body or spirit over body, feminist spirituality emphasizes affirmation and celebration of the human body, of physicality, frank sexuality, nonhierarchical and nonoppressive erotic and sensual experience. Unmasking the "spirit's battle over flesh" as a masculinist dichotomous warfare that has led to a distaste for women's physicality, femaleness and particularly roundness is just one element of the critique of dominant cultural ideas that ultimately leads to a revaluing of the female body. Similarly, the self is seen primarily as self-in-relation. Connection with life and earth are esteemed. Webs, spirals, circles are used as symbols and illustrations, testifying to the renewed emphasis on the relational. The inseparability of (1) social transformation, (2) political action and (3) one's self-conscious spiritual life is underscored. Through claiming heritage to women's past, to indigenous cultures, and to reinterpreted, reconstructed or revitalized elements of religious and spiritual traditions women are not only striving to restore dignity and power to marginalized groups but also are reimagining the divine.

Before discussing a theory of women's journeys, a summary of the latest principles, research and directions for the well-being of women by feminist scholars may be foundational. For the most part, writers in both the fields of psychology and theology are concerned with what it means to have a sense of self, what are the needs of the self and what is the relationship of the self to others, particularly with regard to individuation and connection. Often gender analysis stresses certain differences between men and women but a more detailed and subtle analysis elucidates differences between life as it is actually lived by women and the cultural expectations that are placed on women as factors which distinguish men from women. This is, of course, J.B. Miller's viewpoint as she analyzes how women are socialized to act out certain roles in society and how these very cultural expectations are ones which need to be encouraged in both sexes in order to build a more humane world. While women may sometimes feel more comfortable in fulfilling patriarchal expectations for themselves; the other corollary is that women may feel unable to perform in ways that are supposed to be more "against their nature", i.e. frowned upon by society; such as when they are called upon to be mechanically skilled, intellectually gifted and function in autonomous ways.

Anne Wilson Schaef, in her ground-breaking book,

Women's Reality, drew attention to the ways in which patriarchy functions to negate and label as sick, bad, crazy, stupid, ugly or incompetent any other experiences and ways of viewing reality besides the ones held by the dominant group (the white male system). She elaborated upon the many ways women's systems of reality differ from the dominant groups' experience, such as with regard to interpretations of time, money, power, value, responsibility, friendship, etc. In a subsequent book, When Society Becomes an Addict,³ she no longer posits that there are a variety of systems which are different but equally valid or helpful. Rather she renames the white male system "the addictive system" and calls it death-dealing rather than life-giving. While one may take issue with her thesis that there is one emerging female system that crosses racial, ethnic and national boundaries, her thesis is important. In coming home to themselves, women need to find ways of being themselves that are authentic to their own experience rather than taking on the dominant viewpoint including the prevalent notion that what is societally related to women is necessarily second-class. Schaef names this process of becoming authentic "getting clear," achieved in part through the validations of perceptions that come in therapy and

³ Anne Wilson Schaef, When Society Becomes an Addict (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

women's groups and valuing the emerging female system within patriarchy.

Thus, Schaef gives us illustrative material from her psychotherapy case load and sweeping intuitive descriptions--a theory which has reached a grassroots popularity in the United States. Appealing more to academics, Jean Baker Miller has begun to articulate what she calls universal particularities in female experience. Both have called for a re-valuing of traditional female "perceptions of reality" or "virtues" which have historically been devalued in patriarchal, misogynist society. Alternately, Dorothy Dinnerstein and Nancy Chodorow, utilizing psycho-analytic theory both have engaged in the pursuit of understanding why it is that women and that which is stereotypically associated with female is devalued in society. Both assert the devaluing of women comes from the universal practice of maternal caretaking, especially in the early years.

A Rutgers University psychologist who conceptualized in the 1950s and 1960s, Dinnerstein wrote a foundational seminal work which draws on the writings of de Beauvoir and psychoanalytic works by Freud, Norman O. Brown and Melanie Klein to counter the conspiratorial theory of history:

The male rule of the world is not a conspiracy imposed by bad, physically strong and mobile men on good physically weak and burdened women. Male rule has grown out of bio-technological conditions which we are just now, as a species, surmounting

and out of the psychological impulses that inevitably develop under those conditions.'

Her analysis links together six themes which might otherwise be seen as disparate; (1) female lack of joy, (2) male possessiveness, (3) the double standard and men's propensity for jealousy, (4) men's fear and hatred of women, (5) men's associating women with both death and carnality, and (6) men's formal authority and propensity for history-making as well as their historical monopoly on creativity, competence and power. Like J.B. Miller and Sherry Ortner, Dinnerstein views women as the repository for all that males find unacceptable in themselves--and thus project upon women--especially certain needs and impulses having to do with the body. Since males cannot allow themselves to feel incomplete in any significant way, they project upon women all that is undesirable in themselves. Dinnerstein's central theme is that both sexes collude together to give males more power because it is less threatening to have a powerful male than a powerful female--the latter being what was experienced by infants in their earliest years as both the source of life and the capricious, restricting, enveloping one. Dinnerstein blames present and historical gender arrangements of mother-rearing and proposes that male hegemony must now be ended because, as Schaef, Miller and Gerda Lerner

' Dinnerstein, 176-77.

assert, patriarchal achievements now threaten to destroy the world.⁵

Like Dinnerstein (although she doesn't cite her work), Nancy Chodorow also rejects biological explanations (mother instinct) and socio-anthropological issues (social learning) to understand male dominance. Conversely, Chodorow criticizes Freud, Klein and ego-psychologists, utilizing instead object relation proponents Winnicott, Fairbairn and Schaefer. Both researchers make the psychological link between male identity problems and male dominance, noting that denying femininity in males leads to denigration of women in general. Both argue for the necessary participation of men in early parenting and child care to break the cycle of female nurturance countered by male contempt for women and resentment of female power. But Chodorow integrates sociological theory into the configuration.

Chodorow describes how there are two different basic maps for males and females in patriarchal culture. In the pre-oedipal phase, females linger longer with more fluid boundaries and more relational capacities due to the simi-

⁵ A critique of Dinnerstein's position necessarily includes such points as the fact that it completely ignores biological predispositions, that it is a Eurocentric and middle-class analysis, that it promotes a blame-the-mother psychology, that it ignores that many men are nurturing and caretaking; and that it reduces culture to psychology rather than addressing history and class. For interesting critiques and comments, see Pauline Bart, Review called "The Mermaid and the Minotaur: A Fishy Story That's Part Bull," Contemporary Psychology 22, no. 11 (1977): 834-35; Elaine Baruch, "Of Mothers and Fathers," Dissent 25 (Winter 1978): 101-2; Eichenbaum and Orbach, 31, 34; and Spretnak, xxv-xxvi.

larities between care-giver and child. In the oedipal phase girls stay close to their mothers but add the erotic attachment to father which sets the stage for a triangle girls later recapitulate as women through the experience of parenting a child themselves. Concluding the oedipal resolution, girls' orientation stays personally and emotionally close to females.

In contrast, boys deny attachment to the mother, identify with the father and become externally related, holding a social orientation position. The family structure is then institutionalized and perpetuated by capitalism which requires that valued work be separated from the family, and becomes non-relational and highly differentiated. With shared parenting, males would not have to deny dependence on females and thus devalue women and females would be less preoccupied with individuation. Although these insights are formative and foundational with regard to other researchers and theorists, an interesting dilemma is set up between Dinnerstein and Chodorow. Dinnerstein explains why it is that mother-rearing produces women-hating. Chodorow shows us how mother-rearing produces women-loving. Lively discussions have followed both theories which have led to more important conclusions, however tentative.⁶

⁶ For a fascinating roundtable on Chodorow's work, see Judith Lorber et al., "Revisions/Reports: On The Reproduction of Mothering: A Methodological Debate," Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 6, no. 3 (Spring 1981): 482-513. Basically, all agree with Chodorow's fundamental psychodynamic story that the mother-daughter relationship generates certain psychological capacities

Gilligan, for example, relies on Chodorow's work to elaborate on male-female differences in moral development. She noted that traditional moral development theories were based on research done with predominantly white, middle-class males and she questioned whether the use of only male norms and values perpetuated women's inequality and subordination, contributing to the oppression of women. Drawing upon the work of Chodorow, Gilligan surmised that boy's needs to separate and differentiate from the mother led to a different moral developmental track from girls whose self-identity is not built upon the cornerstone of individuation and separation but on the ability to make and maintain relationships. Once again, patriarchal culture values that which is connected with maleness--especially in Western society where culture values detachment, autonomy, rugged individualism, "the man on his own." Gilligan writes,

When the interconnections of the web are dissolved by the hierarchical ordering of relationship, when nets are portrayed as dangerous entrapments, impeding flight rather than protecting against fall, women come to question whether what they have seen exists and whether what they know from their own experience is true.⁷

and psychic structures in women and the mother-son relationship generates a particular configuration in men. The critique centers on how the mother-daughter relationship perpetuates women's maternal capacities. Additionally, the critique questions the role of historical context, including prospects and mechanisms for the future.

⁷ Gilligan, In a Different Voice, 49.

Gilligan's work has been criticized for setting up one more set of dualisms--men's vs. women's ways of moral and ethical decisions, with men tending to make moral and ethical decisions on the basis of rights and self-enhancement and women tending to make such decisions with regard to responsibilities and networks of relationships. Men, she says, tend to think of themselves as isolated individuals situated at the center of their world in competition with others. They are inclined to fear intimacy and have problems with relationships. Conversely, women see themselves in a web of relationships and are fearful of isolation. Women have problems with differentiation of the self, experiencing their boundaries as too fluid rather than too rigid:

Gilligan's work is crucial for understanding some issues in imaging the deity. If, as Gilligan posits, men think in terms of hierarchy with the most powerful at the top and women think in terms of interconnections and fear being too far out on the edge of the web, it stands to reason that the god as conceived in traditional Judaism and Christianity is seen as powerful because he is separate, different from human beings and alone, self-sufficient, the only referent in the cosmos that has no other referent.

A final note of caution in working with Gilligan's concepts: a valuing of relationality does not automatically

lead to substantive norms such as justice.⁸ Justice, as discussed in Chapter 3, is the cornerstone of feminist critique, methodology and vision. Nevertheless, Gilligan's work on interdependence and the ethics of care and responsibility as important seminal values of women's authentic lives is important in the discussion of women's psychological and spiritual journeys.

Coming into one's authentic self, or true self, is a crucial part of women's journey. Most theorists are in agreement that self for women is self-in-relation. Margaret Craddock Huff, in her article, "The Interdependent Self,"⁹ discusses this concept as addressed in the writings coming out of the Stone Center for Developmental Studies at Wellesley College.¹⁰ Since women have special needs for relationships which are mutually empathic, they require

⁸ Christine M. Smith, Weaving the Sermon: Preaching in a Feminist Perspective (Louisville: Westminster/Knox, 1989), 37.

⁹ Margaret Craddock Huff, "The Interdependent Self: An Integrated Concept from Feminist Theology and Feminist Psychology," Philosophy and Theology 2 (Winter 1987): 160-72.

¹⁰ The colloquia are published as "Works in Progress", Stone Center Working Paper Series, Wellesley, Mass., and have presented a new approach to psychology of women. Since 1981 five primary women practicing feminist psychotherapy in the Boston area, have been identified with the self-in-relation model: Jean Baker Miller, Alexandra Kaplan, Judith Jordan, Irene Stiver, and Janet Surrey. Catherine Keller proposes a similar interconnected womanself as that proposed by the Stone Center although the genesis of her conceptualization comes out of a Jungian model. See her book From a Broken Web: Separation, Sexism, and Self (Boston: Beacon, 1986).

growth-enhancing relationships.¹¹ Five characteristics are mentioned as distinguishing dynamics, which Huff then relates to feminist theological principles. The dimension of relationship (which can mean more than with just one person, can denote a relationship with someone never met, or someone dead, or an animal) is "zest." This refers to the feeling of being alive and connected. Huff thinks this is analogous to grace as an awareness of potential. A second basic requirement for growth-enhancing relationship is empowerment--the participants feel empowered to act within that relationship and subsequently because of this, in other relationships as well. Huff makes the correlation between this concept of power-in-relation with Dorothee Soelle's notion of "co-creation"¹² and what Elizabeth Bettenhausen means by the "power of creativity."¹³ Mutual empowerment means an enhancement of the participants toward positive action rather than passivity or negativity, while disempowerment diminishes individuals and relationships and promotes alienation.¹⁴

¹¹ Jean Baker Miller, "What Do We Mean by Relationships?" Stone Center Working Papers Series 11, no. 22 (1986).

¹² Dorothee Soelle and S. Cloyes, To Work and To Love: A Theology of Creation (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984).

¹³ Elizabeth Bettenhausen, "Feminism, Human Rights, and the Global Mission of the Church," as noted by Huff, 166.

¹⁴ Huff, 166.

A third aspect of growth-enhancing relationships is increased self-knowledge and other-knowledge of the participants. Miller calls the important components of this growing knowledge as sharing of thought-feelings which includes both emotion felt and thought content for they are inseparable. Huff links this with Bettenhausen's "passionate love in the face of injustice," and concludes that such experiences are the basis for advocacy to be with others in the struggle for empowerment of all people involved. Some writers, including J.B. Miller, called this "response/ability."¹⁵

Beyond active advocacy with and for women, growth-enhancing relationships increase a sense of worth for all involved. Rather than perpetuating a woman's sense of non-person status, or second-class citizenship, relationships help promote women's sense of value and appropriateness. Rather than speaking of self-sacrifice or dependence, Huff links this with the positive enhancing of one another through the mutual interchange of the impact we have had on one another. Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza writes,

Christian spirituality means eating together, sharing together, drinking together, talking with each other, receiving each other, experiencing God's presence through each other, and, in doing so, proclaiming the gospel as God's alternative vision for everyone, especially for those who are poor, outcast, and battered.¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid., 166-67.

¹⁶ Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 345.

The final dimension of growth-enhancing relationships which contributes positively to women's sense of self--and thus to identity and well-being as self-in-relation--is the enlarging of the circle of care and concern for others through the empowerment of close relationships. Rather than specifically sympathy or need to be needed, or even sentimental love for others, Miller calls this "the active, outgoing feeling of caring about another person because that person is so valued in our eyes."¹⁷ Margaret Farley made this point in a speech at a women's spirituality conference in Detroit, Michigan, in 1988:

It is not that our hearts melt with sympathy and pity for the poor and we then say, 'I love you even though you are unlovable'--ugh--it is because we have tasted of the cup of suffering in solidarity with the poor and it is first a cup of covenanted love that has awakened our recognition of their beauty.¹⁸

Again, this theme comes full circle back to the justice norm for feminist theology, for Farley goes on to say white women must make a preferential option for the poor and people of color. Citing the work of Isasi-Diaz, Farley reminds us that loving and respectful relatedness calls for bringing marginalized groups into the circle--not on the periphery of concern but welcomed at the center.

If any among us has been exploited or had their heritage stolen or has been seen as less than human, humiliated or ignored, then these are the

¹⁷ Jean Baker Miller, "What Do We Mean by Relationships," 141.

¹⁸ "Remembering Rachel, A Conference on the Spiritual Woman," Mercy College, Detroit (10-11 Apr. 1989).

poor, the unprotected, the disadvantaged. Theirs is the voice that is least likely to be heard or allowed equal time; we must recognize the strategic priority to those whom society has unfairly burdened, unfairly treated.¹⁹

The potential for such self-in-relation, according to Miller, may be manifest in an infant's "basic ability to act,"²⁰ but as Huff maintains, "egalitarian interdependence must be achieved through the experience of many growth-enhancing relations,"²¹ at least one of which may be the relationship between the feminist pastoral counselor and client.

If we take the work of Alice Miller seriously, the foundational true self or authentic self needed for interdependence is rarely manifested in Western society due to the present and historical hierarchical control elements of parenting and the woundedness of children who become parents and continue to pass on inadequate parenting patterns to their own children. In her first book, The Drama of the Gifted Child: The Search for the True Self,²² which provides groundwork for all her subsequent theories, Miller attests that all children want love from their parents and strive to attain their approval to the extent that they will even

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Jean Baker Miller, "What Do We Mean by Relationships," 20.

²¹ Huff, 169.

²² Alice Miller, The Drama of the Gifted Child: The Search for the True Self (New York: Basic, 1979).

unconsciously create "false selves," to fulfill the parents' psychological needs. Because parents were physically and psychologically abused as children, they perpetuate a system of institutionalized cruelty and aggression of all kinds in child-victimizing society. Harsh treatment is said to be "good for children." Children then begin to believe that they are bad, that they do deserve harsh treatment. They deny their own feelings as parents will not allow their offspring to express anger, sadness, envy or any other authentic emotions. Because of this, whole generations of people grow up without the ability to empathize.

In Miller's next book, For Your Own Good,²³ she extrapolates on children's tendency to idealize parents and asks the crucial questions, "What if child abuse exists on a global scale? And what would it mean if whole populations of persons grew up repressing their 'true selves?'" In this book she uses case histories to illustrate common child-rearing practices in Germany in the generations before the rise of the Third Reich. The manuals prescribe regular beatings of children, occasional starvation (to teach moderation), tempting them to lie or cheat (and then beating them for it) and, above all, teaching them to be obedient without question or hesitation. Other studies of Nazi

²³ Alice Miller, For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1983).

Germany have shown that parents of the resisters raised their children in gentle and loving homes.

Although Alice Miller is not usually classified as a feminist psychoanalyst, in her later works she utilizes authors such as Susan Griffin and Florence Rush. Her tenets, such as the major one of "don't blame the victim" are in line with feminist thought. And feminist theologians, such as Rita Brock who uses heart to reflect true self and broken heart to reflect false self, are beginning to base their writings in part on her work.²⁴ Miller advocates that in order not to bury true selves, the child must have needs and feelings acknowledged and mirrored by parents. Otherwise false selves will be hostages to dependence on others as their locus of evaluation, prisoners to low self-esteem bolstered only infrequently by accomplishment, success and neverending achievement, and entrapped by depression since intense passions are never acknowledged.

²⁴ Brock employs the term heart to mean returning to the true self; "the empathic center region of the most vital meaning and core of life; the source of love, empathy, loyalty and courage, integrity, insight, consciousness and conscience." Journeys by Heart, xiv. This use of heart makes her position slightly different from theologians such as Fiorenza, Ruether, Heyward and Russell who advocate overturning patriarchal power hierarchies. She writes, "Their excellent articulation of the turning of oppressed and oppressor upside down as essential to liberation has allowed me to emphasize a different aspect of feminist work. I am seeking to turn patriarchy inside out, to reveal its ravaged, faint, fearful, broken heart, and to illuminate the power that heals heart. It is a power that allows the touching of heart to heart, a healing and touching that guide us toward a greater experience of the sacred in life." Ibid., xv.

These are also important elements for background in understanding and depicting women's psychological journeys.

Finally, one more building block of psychological foundation for the subsequent paving of women's journeys is a later work by Carol Gilligan. Utilizing object relations again and speaking to the issues of true and false selves, Gilligan underscores how "predisposition toward justice and toward care can be traced to the experiences of inequality and of attachment that are embedded in the relationship between child and parent."²⁵ She makes several crucial points for women's sense of self-in-relation. First she takes on the object relations school's prescription of mirroring with regard to adult women; second, she explains the difference between a morality based on fairness and a morality based on inclusiveness; and third, she describes feminist development not as a failure to individuate but as a struggle for inclusive solution. Deeper explanation is in order.

Psychoanalysts, among others, have written about the child's need for mirroring by the parent in order to develop true selves. Daniel Stern in his important book, The Interpersonal World of the Infant²⁶ extended into the laboratory the theories of D.W. Winnicott, Margaret Mahler and Heinz

²⁵ Carol Gilligan, "Mapping the Moral Domain: New Images of Self in Relationship," Cross Currents 39, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 51.

²⁶ Daniel N. Stern, The Interpersonal World of the Infant (New York: Basic, 1985).

Kohut. Stern labeled the mirroring techniques used naturally by mothers "attunements." They are usually unconscious behaviors which serve to communicate to babies mothers' awareness of the inner feelings of the baby.

Stern gives examples of mothers tuning in to their infants feelings. One story is about a nine-month-old girl who excitedly reaches for a toy and manages to grasp it, giving out an exuberant "Ahhh!" as she looks toward her mother. The mother returns the look, scrunches up her shoulders, and performs, says Stern, "a terrific shimmy with her upper body, like a go-go dancer." The shimmy lasts only about as long as the little girl's "Ahhhh!" but recapitulates the joy, intensity and thrill. Similarly, a ten-month-old girl, not without difficulty, places a piece in a jigsaw puzzle. Glancing toward her mother, she shoves her head up and flaps her arms exuberantly, lifting her partially off the ground in excitement. "YES, thatta girl," punctuates the mother in vocal imitation of the child's posturing. In this way, Stern illustrate how mothers use metaphor or symbol to show the baby they understand how the child feels.²⁷ Colette Dowling calls this mirroring the key to self-esteem,²⁸ echoing "George Herbert Mead's description of the self as known through others' reflection and Cooley's

²⁷ Ibid., 141.

²⁸ Colette Dowling, Perfect Women: Daughters Who Love Their Mothers But Don't Love Themselves (New York: Pocket, 1988), chapter 6.

conception of the looking-glass self in others' recognition."²⁹

Gilligan would like to replace mirroring with dialogue as a central metaphor for identity formation. Dialogue presupposes a notion of reciprocity, a mutual transformation. "If the process of coming to know others is imagined, instead, as a joining of stories, it implies the possibility of learning from others in ways that transform the self."³⁰ Through dialogue, the self is defined by gaining voice and perspective and becomes known to oneself and others in the experience of engagement with others. Building on this concept, Gilligan shows how an ethic of inclusiveness combines two stories at once and transforms each while an ethic of fairness gives air time to each option discretely. She gives an example:

Two four-year-olds--a girl and a boy--were playing together and wanted to play different games. In this version of a common dilemma, the girl said, "Let's play next-door neighbors." "I want to play pirates," the boy replied. "Okay," said the girl, "then you can be the pirate that lives next door."

Gilligan then compares the inclusive solution of combining the two games with the fair solution of taking turns with equal time for each game, showing how the approaches yield not only different ways of solving problems in relationships

²⁹ Gilligan, "Mapping," 53.

³⁰ Ibid.

but also how the identity of the game and the experience of the relationship are both changed:

The fair solution, taking turns, leaves the identity of each game intact. It provides an opportunity for each child to experience the other's imaginative world and regulates the exchanges by imposing a rule based on the premise of equal respect. The inclusive solution, in contrast, transforms both games: the neighbor game is changed by the presence of a pirate living next door: the pirate game is changed by bringing the pirate into a neighborhood. Each child not only enters the other's imaginative world but also transforms that world by his or her presence. The identity of each separate game yields to a new combination, since the relationship between the children gives rise to a game that neither had separately imagined. Whereas the fair solution protects identity and ensure equality within the context of relationship, the inclusive solution transforms identity through the experience of relationship.³¹

Gilligan points out that girls' resistance to detachment (Freud's theory of normal adolescent identity development) from parental authority can be seen not as signifying a failure to individuate but rather may indicate a struggle to find an inclusive solution to the problem of conflicting loyalties. Resisting movements toward disengagement, female development with its emphasis on transformation of attachments "may help define an image of the self in relationship that leads to a different vision of progress and civilization."³² Here again, feminist psychology's emphasis on the healthy woman as a self-in-relation corresponds directly to

³¹ Ibid., 57-8.

³² Ibid., 59.

feminist spirituality's common theme of the interconnections of all aspects of life and the need for a comprehensive, connecting, inclusive theology and theory of justice.

Parameters of the Metaphor Journey

Djorhariah Toor, a therapist, potter, painter, teacher and mother writes in a poetic way about the healing journey for women:

To journey means to undertake an inner walk that eventually leads to the vision of who we really are. It is a search for the self the world has obscured; a reaching inward to the place that we knew long ago, but have since forgotten and covered over. It is a gathering up from within of what is denied and repressed, what is unacknowledged and unseen; a collecting of all the different sides of ourselves we don't like, can't embrace, or don't want to see. . . . it is a calling together of all the orphans of our humanity, a bringing forth of the remnants within the self that are incomplete.

When we embark upon the journey we begin a walk into ourselves; into both flesh and spirit, into the leaves and rocks of our being. We make a foray into that within us which is not only denied and unseen, but undiscovered: into the self we do not yet know. When we journey through the personality to the deeper self, we touch not only what is wounded and incomplete, but we tap into that which is also potentially a treasure. The journey is a vision quest in which we might learn to walk in beauty. . . . To heal the feminine is a woman's journey toward wholeness.³³

For women living under conditions of patriarchy, the journey to the authentic self has to do with a woman-defined rather than androcentric quest and defining the direction in which one is heading must be declared by women for

³³ Djorhariah Toor, The Road by the River: A Healing Journey for Women (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 2.

themselves. Once again, we are reminded that patriarchy can be generally defined as a male-dominant power structure in society wherein all relationships are understood in terms of hierarchy and dualism--superiority or inferiority. Social cohesion is assured by the exercise of dominative power.³⁴

That which is associated with females is devalued, and that which is associated with males is seen as "the norm," if not valued as more superior. Sexual difference becomes the occasion for gender inequality. Females are subjected to the male construct of "femininity." Furthermore, the political differentiation of the sexes into social classes, with the inherent disproportion of power and the subordination of women is "difficult to protest without appearing to challenge God 'himself.'"³⁵ Most feminists consider patriarchy, widely defined, to be the basic principle underlying sexism, racism, classism, colonialism, and other institutionalized patterns of inequality. Feminist theologians are quick to point out that inequality of power becomes embedded in how we view reality and in how we do theology. Patriarchy informs and influences our language, our thought processes and structures, even the questions we raise. The very naming of God and the attributes assigned to God have every-

³⁴ Sandra Schneider, Women and the Word: The Gender of God in the New Testament (New York: Paulist, 1986), 13.

³⁵ Bloomquist, 47.

thing to do with patriarchy and power.³⁶

For purposes of describing women's journeys it is critical to understand that patriarchy forces people into hierarchical roles which they then come to own themselves, often without the slightest realization that that is exactly what they have done. Patriarchy is not so simple as the rule of all men over all women. The interlocking of classism and racism impact the prescribed roles for women. As Cooley points out,

[Patriarchy] signifies that males of the ruling class of patriarchal culture define the identity of "woman" according to the race, class, and creed of the men with whom such women are affiliated and to whom they are subordinated . . . simply because they are women. The significance of the ostensible sexual differences between men and women thus becomes central for a woman's self-understanding.³⁷

The critical point is this: under conditions of patriarchy, "the toughest choice women face today is the extent to which we willingly assume responsibility for the how, whom, and what we value, for our acts of valuing ultimately define our identities."³⁸

³⁶ Bloomquist points out that because we are so culturally "hooked on the myth of the self-contained, self-possessed, autonomous man, such an image has also been projected onto God. . . . Insofar as our culture has devalued what is associated with women, so too we have devalued such in God." Ibid., 56.

³⁷ Paula Cooley, "The Word Become Flesh: Woman's Body, Language, and Value," in Cooley, Farmer and Ross, 17.

³⁸ Ibid., 31.

The journey for women is a journey into one's own authentic self which ultimately includes a revaluing of who we are, what we need, where we are going and how it is we choose to move in that direction. Inevitably it means a struggle and resistance to the stereotypical definitions patriarchy sets for who we are supposed to be. Within each of the numerous varieties of racial, ethnic, national and creedal backgrounds--in the heterogeneity of subcultures--women must be about the business of naming our own oppressions, choosing the ways in which to form solidarities to resist and transform both role-prescriptions and societal structures of oppression and to dream the visions of who it is we are and what it is we value.

The ongoing process of the journey is the assimilation of an authentic sense of integrity of self. This requires an attention paid to the needs of the self, as mentioned earlier. It is not unlike coming home to a true inner self as opposed to a false self. Just as children put on a false self to please parents, so women put on a false self to please dominant society. Cooley writes eloquently about the search for authentic self:

Whereas the distinguishing characteristic of false identity is assimilation to an alien but dominant culture, integrity involves, by contrast, the discovery of one's deepest, truest, personal identity as inextricably aligned to her or his historical, and often religious, community.³⁹

³⁹ Paula Cooley, "Suffering and Power: An Anatomy of Transformation," *Anima* 14, no. 2 (n.d.): 128.

The point is well-taken that one needs to assimilate the positive legacy of one's culture. With regard to white women who are both oppressed and oppressors, however, the task includes a need to work to transform the dominant white culture from institutionalized racism, sexism, classism and heterosexism. For white women it also means coming home to a sense of "women's culture." Whether or not one agrees with Jessie Bernard that there is a distinct and overarching female world, one can utilize the metaphor of woman-culture to help discern the difference between (1) that which is associated with femaleness and must be revalued, as J.B. Miller notes, and (2) that which is stereotypically related to women and detrimental to their health and well-being.

A false identity, says Cooley, is a most seductive and brutal form of oppression. Analyzing the protagonist, Avey Johnson, in Paula Marshall's Praisesong for the Widow, Cooley tracks her transformation, simultaneously personal and social, a theme which Cooley claims reflects a major trend in twentieth century women's fiction. Cooley's investigations elucidate how the character undergoes a transformation from Avey, an upper middle-class black woman who has assimilated almost entirely to white culture, to Avatara, "an appearance of divine power and being, an incarnation of the positive legacy of her own heritage as both black and female." Her metamorphosis is marked

by the role played by ritual as that which integrates physical with emotional suffering, memory with anticipation, suffering, in turn with

erotic power, and transformed individual human being with a wider community and its vision.⁴⁰

Avey's false self--that which she needs purged from her own identity, says Cooley--is "her honky identity and her guilt feelings toward her daughter and her race."⁴¹ Avey's assimilation to white culture, in part due to the success of her family's upward mobility is particularly dangerous because it masquerades as relative power. Avey had not yet realized, except at a visceral level, that she had unknowingly sold out to the white system bit by bit over the years. Society had seemingly rewarded her for her white-washing of herself,

[Such false identity] is more brutal than the initial oppression, for it provides its victims . . . the means by which to participate in their own victimization; more brutal, further, for it provides its victims with the weapons for committing lateral violence upon one another.⁴²

Finally through a series of events, including Avey's participation in a ritual dance in Carraicou, she becomes transformed, finding her true identity. This is not without a particular cost, and is not accomplished lightly or easily. "Liberation in this context involves a shattering of self-deception, an extremely painful experience, for it smashes what is at least an illusion of power." False identity perpetuates itself because it seems to help the

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 129.

⁴² Ibid., 135.

woman avoid suffering. Confronting false identity can move us from suffering "disguised as power, to undisguised, raw, and painful suffering." To become a self-identified individual in a racist, sexist and classist society is, for Avey (and I would suggest generally speaking for most women) not an easy journey to make, but the glimpse of integrity affords a locus of hope. Cooley concludes,

The figure of Avatara as a particular locus of hope for universal freedom reminds those of us who are white women, particularly feminist theorists, that we are at once bound to her suffering as a woman and white co-participants in her oppression as black. The dominant culture is both ours and not ours, a further ambiguity we cannot circumvent, but must allow to transform us. . . . In short there is no final, realized individual integrity without realized social transformation.⁴³

The theme of psychological and spiritual journeys for women comes up in the most recent literature. Madonna Kolbenschlag has written one such book, called Lost in the Land of Oz.⁴⁴ It was hailed by one reviewer as a "feminist Habits of the Heart."⁴⁵ Whereas Bellah speaks of loss of self in the male myth of separation and individualism, claiming women could share in this myth too, Kolbenschlag uses myth and metaphors to empower women to confront our feelings of loneliness and alienation and to connect with other women on

⁴³ Ibid., 135-6.

⁴⁴ Kolbenschlag.

⁴⁵ Kaye Cook, review of Lost in the Land of Oz, by Madonna Kohlenschlag, Daughters of Sarah (Nov.-Dec. 1989): 24.

the journey. The metaphor Kolbenschlag finds helpful is that we, like Dorothy, are spiritual orphans. We live by certain patriarchal myths. The journey into self-knowledge leads us to leave home, but we must also choose to leave the secure boundaries of home, to leave behind the false selves that we, like Avey, feel protect us from suffering. Instead we must recreate our myths, replacing those of the dominant society with truer myths of commitment to one another, openness to new experiences and unity with nature and earth. The purpose of the journey is to confront binding patriarchies and nameless fears that dissipate when we challenge them directly. Our journey is toward our own empowerment.

There are several other maps for women's journeys available in the literature. Becker uses the metaphor of journey when she gives a model for women's journey toward health, well-being and empowerment with regard to the modern battle with anxiety and change--a battle she calls both mythic and heroic."

Rita Nakashima Brock calls her feminist christology "journeys by heart." She suggests a new understanding of Christianity as a relational "religion of heart"--a metaphor she uses for the capacity for intimacy, the union of body, spirit, reason and passion which is connected and sustained by interrelationships. Empowerment of women and the

" Carol Becker, The Invisible Drama: Women and the Anxiety of Change (New York: MacMillan, 1987).

oppressed is again the journey's aim which comes about through the reimmersion of self in a "Christa-Community," a connectedness that provides the basis for transformation. This transformation she calls the mandate to "turn patriarchy inside out," a refrain she reiterates throughout her work.

Other writers, such as Sylvia Perera in Descent to the Goddess, map out a spiritual and psychological journey using Jungian archetypes and the myth of Innana.⁴⁷ Evelyn Underhill who has written about Western mysticism discusses the spiritual journey with stages such as illumination, purification, dark night of the soul, awakening and the goal of achieving a unitive life, characterized by the end of previous vacillations between struggle and peace, struggle and renewed peace.⁴⁸

The journey metaphor is not without its problems. Most, if not all literal journeys have a concrete destination, as Underhill has suggested. Just as feminist therapy may differ from other therapy in that it is less goal-oriented and more process-oriented, in the same sense women's spiritual journeys cannot be understood to have a concrete goal as an achievement. Even empowerment is relative in a patriarchal society, and women's liberation is not

⁴⁷ Sylvia Perera, Descent to the Goddess (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1981).

⁴⁸ As discussed in Ochs, 131.

complete until all oppressed persons are liberated. This is one reason why Ochs chooses instead the metaphor of a spiritual walk.

Another problem is that of the possibility of reducing the journey to discrete stages, seasons-of-life or stair-step ascent, a linear model so often discussed in the developmental literature as well as the books on spirituality. Instead the journey needs to be understood as one that curves, is three dimensional, goes up mountains and down into valleys (not just once but again and again) and can circle back upon itself. In a real sense, as Nelle Morton's book title indicates, "the journey is home." There needs to be a sense of progression as time and experience move and change people, without the overarching obligations of where one "should be" on some graded scale.

I became interested in formulating a model for women's spiritual and psychological journeys after reading several of the above-mentioned books and then attending a conference on Women's Spirituality in Long Beach, California, where I participated in workshops with therapist Maurine Murdock and clinical psychologist Cheryl Purdue. Although their work is unpublished, I have drawn upon some of their descriptions of spiritual and psychological journeys. I also have utilized women's writings on their spiritual journeys from a variety of particular sources. They include two collections of faith journey stories: Mary Jo Meadow and Carole Rayburn, A

Time to Weep, A Time to Sing,⁴⁹ and Catherine Racette and Peg Reynolds, American Women: Our Spirituality in Our Own Words;⁵⁰ and the numerous testimonies by women theologians as they have described their personal spiritual journeys in their articles and books. Women therapists and psychologists have contributed to the proposal through their discussions of their own experience and that of their clients and patients. Last but not least, I have relied upon my own experience, that of my friends, colleagues and clients. The journey is continually embellished as I learn more and I revise it according to feedback from several different groups to which I have presented the following material at workshops or classes.⁵¹

Before moving directly to the model of one way of journeying particularly applicable to white women, several notes are still in order. The movement of the journey is like the tide toward the shore, a continual cycling toward integrity, self-respect and well-being, through a

⁴⁹ Meadow and Rayburn.

⁵⁰ Catherine Racette and Peg Reynolds, American Women: Our Spirituality in Our Own Words (Santa Fe: Bear, 1984).

⁵¹ I presented the tri-partite journey to a support group of Disciples of Christ women ministers in the Southern California area; in a workshop at the "Remembering Rachel; a Woman's Spirituality Conference" and at a conference for clergy and mental health professionals where I did a keynote speech on pastoral care and depression and lead a workshop on God images at The Psychiatric Institute, Philadelphia, Pa. I also presented some of this material at a church-wide weekend retreat for a Presbyterian church in Alexandria, Va. Lastly, I have presented this material in classes at Wesley Theological Seminary.

self-defining process. If for no other reason than because we are not discrete, autonomous individuals but are continually affected by our relationships and experiences, our sense of self is expanding. As Marjorie Suchocki writes,

. . . no sooner have we completed this process of creative integration than we ourselves affect others, who thus change and require further change in us. No sooner is one task of integrative response complete than we are called upon to do it yet again. There is a continuous birth of ourselves out of the welter of energies coming into us and emanating from us. . . . What a dancing world it is; what a great interlocking network!⁵²

Secondly, as Cooley noted, women's identity emerges from how, whom and what women actually value. The process of revaluing on the basis on nonpatriarchal standards is not an easy one, and acting upon those new values is even more difficult. Remembering that all forms of oppression encourage people to enlist in their own oppression, it stands to reason that women have deep fears that they will not live up to patriarchal norms: will they be loved, will they remain secure, will people even tolerate them? The reason that oppressed groups are afraid of moving from stereotypical positions of subordinates is that the patriarchy is swift with its retribution, and the threats have been enacted in the past for those who "step out of line." J.B. Miller has mentioned that psychological problems for women are not so much caused by unconscious elements but as a deprivation of full consciousness, even though some women

⁵² Suchocki, 395.

may later reflect, along with folksinger Chris Williamson, "Sometimes I wish my eyes hadn't been opened."⁵³ At the same time, once one has been brought to partial consciousness, it is almost impossible to backtrack in consciousness, even if acting upon a new sense of values remains difficult, even dangerous.

In presenting the schema to groups, women commented that differences exist in the degree of difficulty women may have in functioning as woman-identified women who appreciate women-identified values, depending upon the particular area. For example, the most difficult area to follow through on self-identified values, they noted, is the work place, contingent upon the institution with which one is affiliated and the intensity of patriarchal values it espouses. Corporate executive positions, for instance, require functioning in highly patriarchal ways while some independent business positions may be less defined by patriarchal processes and goals. Heterosexual romantic ties remain troublesome relationships in which to proceed with woman-centered values, since they tend to be more invested in the status quo. Also it's not easy for women to find men who are secure enough to venture out of relationships dominated by androcentric values. Lesbian relationships, as with other oppressed groups' relationships, are not unaffected by

⁵³ Chris Williamson, The Changer and the Changed, Olivia Records, Inc., 1975.

patriarchal patterns of relating if only because of the syndrome of copying dominant relationships. Women's friendships are perhaps the relationships most congenial to women-identified patterns of relating and values; many women say they feel like they can most be themselves in relationships with their best women friends. As Becker writes,

On the day-to-day struggle to transform the pre-scribed course of their lives, women depend upon the friendships of other women. Within these friendships, as within therapy, women study their experience, and try to understand the resistances in themselves and in society that make change difficult. Here women gain courage to confront the tyranny of niceness, the loss of the self in romantic love, the inability to nurture themselves, and the loss of the connection with the female which makes the world seem hostile and foreign to women's sensibility. Here women discuss daily anxiety that results from consciously trying to transform centuries of tradition. Friendships give women the strength to stand up to their own psychological resistances.⁵⁴

Feminism is not simply a political and social movement; it also can be described in spiritual terms. Cooley has written about religious conversion in terms of a feminist transformation to a new way of valuing and a new way of life. Carol Christ has called feminist journeying spiritual because it often begins with an experience of nothingness, moving through stages of rage into new eyes. Community is indispensable for the naming of experience and the recognition of shared experiences that are energizing and liberating.

⁵⁴ Becker, 128.

To be on a woman-identified quest is to be searching for "a deep and radical new acceptance of one's self as female and a trust in women's thought and living for clues as to how to get out from under the reigning androcentric social order."⁵⁵ To be woman-identified is to choose to think and behave beyond the prescribed parameters of patriarchal mandates.⁵⁶ Alternately it "means the capacity to feel and envision justice for women on the basis of concrete relationships with real women, rather than on the predefined concepts of androcentric world views."⁵⁷ What women are moving toward is self-possession, profound relationality and the emergence of creative caring. Integrity, insight and consciousness are valued anew.

In the following model I will discuss some of the phases women may cycle through with regard to acceptance and

⁵⁵ Emily Culpepper in Jacob Needleman and George Baker, Understanding the New Religions (New York: Seabury, 1978), 223-24.

⁵⁶ Mary Daly puts it this way: "Self-definition beyond the amorphous blob-concept of 'human essence'/'human nature.' . . . " Mary Daly and Jane Caputi, Webster's First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language (Boston: Beacon, 1987), 251.

⁵⁷ Brock, Journeys, 67. It must be noted that the use of the term "woman" is not regarded as positive by all feminists. Some feminists choose to change the spelling to eliminate its immediate link with man ("wimmin," "wommon"). For Sara Hoagland, a mere change in spelling would not do because the entire concept of woman is so colored by patriarchy that it lacks "1) a sense of female power, 2) any hint that women as a group have been the targets of male violence, 3) any hint either of collective or individual female resistance to male domination and control, and 4) any sense of lesbian connection." See her book Lesbian Ethics: Toward New Value (Palo Alto, Calif.: Institute of Lesbian Studies, 1988), 34.

carrying through of stereotypical norms for female behavior, especially for white middle-class women of the present time. Again, the simplest places to acquiesce to androcentric standards of female behavior tend to be in the work place and in heterosexual relationships, while it may be easier to carve out one's own identity and patterns of agency and response based on women-centered values with personal women friends. I suggest three somewhat distinct phases in the next chapter and will describe them in full.

CHAPTER 5

Tri-Partite Journey: A Model

Introduction

Women's spiritual journeys seem to follow a general cycle of movement. Though I describe these in terms of phases or stages, they are more accurately understood as modes of being. In some areas of a woman's life, it almost comes naturally to function spontaneously in coherence with self-identified, woman-centered values. Women note differences in contexts. They may function in one when in the company of other woman-identified women, and quite another way as part of a patriarchal business setting. Over time women note differences in how they participate in patriarchal romantic notions of love (either heterosexual or lesbian). In other words, there is a wide differential in adaptation to dominant, oppressive values. I suggest three somewhat distinct phases with a break between the second and third often preceding a more distinct leap into the third phase. I will describe these phases in terms of what the phase-identified self and spirituality commonly entail, with particular attention paid to the phase with regard to its center, affirmation, goals, extremes, typical illnesses, spirituality, definitions of sin and virtue, god images and some therapy issues.

Phase I. Female-Identified

I call this phase the stereotypical female norm in patriarchal society. Women here conform to patriarchal standards concerning female behavior historically presumed to be historical; true femininity. The literature from feminist psychology tends to label this the traditional woman (as opposed to the next phase which could be called the male-identified, superwoman or new woman role), a norm for white women at this particular time.¹ The woman's life here is often centered around her immediate family, in particular her male companion or husband and children. The male is the protector and provider who provides economic support and affords the family its status. Since 80 percent of US women work outside the home at least part-time, and two-thirds of these have young children, the family configuration is not necessarily one of woman staying home to take care of the children while the husband works outside the home. However, the husband's career is afforded the

¹ Mary Daly calls this woman a fembot ("female robot: the archetypical role model forced upon women throughout fatherland; the unstated goal/end of socialization into patriarchal womanhood;: the totaled woman." Webster's First New, 198. She also quotes Marabel Morgan, author of The Total Woman, as saying the total woman is one who "caters to her man's special quirks, whether it be in salads, sex, or sports," and "It is only when a woman surrenders her life to her husband, reveres and worships him, and is willing to serve him, that she becomes really beautiful to him." Ibid, 232. Daly connects this issue of man image with god image in quoting Ruth Carter Stapleton, "Try to spend a little time each day visualizing Jesus coming in the door from work. Then see yourself walking up to him, embracing him. Say to Jesus, "It's good to have you home, Nick." Ibid.

higher priority and he usually makes more money than the wife. Children and housework are the primary responsibility of the woman. For single heterosexual women in this phase, being in a relationship with a man is of high priority, preferably a man who has a higher earning power, is taller, heavier, more intelligent and who makes her feel loved and secure. In summary, women in this phase tend to live out the stereotypically female role in traditional white terms: what is affirmed is submissiveness, docility, living through others, dependency and wielding power in the home.

The goal for women in this phase is to please men: their husbands, lovers, fathers and god. As a subordinate, the woman is a nobody, whose concern is everyone else around her; to please them and make them happy is to feel loved and worthwhile. In this her boundaries can become undifferentiated and overly dependent, she may be indiscriminating and her life may feel chaotic, focused as it is on the ebb and flow of the lives of others.

Because her power is derived only from her connection with others, she may feel her boundaries are merged or diffuse. Traditionally, these very porous boundaries can mean that such women have the ability to feel deeply about social justice issues and the needs of others. This ability itself is revalued as a virtue by J.B. Miller--the propensity to connect with others being a strong suit in women and other minorities. However, because there is not also a

strong sense of self, relationships with others may exhibit patterns of codependence. A mother may find it easy to fall into the proverbial martyr role, smothering the children and other relatives with too much care and concern, overprotecting and over-involved in the lives of others, all the while angry because she has sacrificed her own needs in the process.

This description must not immediately fall prey to the blame-the-mother syndrome for, as many feminist counselors point out, women have been socialized to find their very identity in and through their men and children. Therefore it stands to reason that problems with boundaries and issues of codependence would occur here. Many women are forced to serve others' needs because it is the only thing they know or because they do it so well. But those who are dependent upon such a woman begin to hate her for their own dependence, so the pattern comes around full-circle.

If one's sole worth is from caring for others, a woman can have incomprehensible anger, agitation and depression. The illnesses which show up frequently for women in this phase reflect just these issues. The mounting resentment for such a position of servitude must be continually fought back, leading to both intropunitive and extrapunitive behaviors,² characterized by self-punishment, passivity,

² Intropunitive women turn their anger about their subordinate position inward. The following seven characteristics are associated with intropunitive persons: (1) utilization of defenses of withdrawal and self-hate, (2) denial of members of their own

guilt, depression and social withdrawal.³ Some women suffer from agoraphobia. Others, unable to succeed in the impossible task of managing others' lives fully, may try to exert control over their weight and body contours, resulting in eating disorders and obsessions with slenderness.

Because they cannot state their feelings (and often are not even able to name them at all), women remain mute. At times, however, powerful emotions will burst through (seemingly out of the clear blue with no particular major provocation), feelings usually associated with hurt and depression, expressed in tears, self-criticism or a series of guilt-inducing statements.⁴ The hurt is easier to express than the anger. Anger involves differentiation and separation from another person. An angry confrontation involves some sense of standing alone, separate. In this phase when a woman gets angry, her anger often turns quickly to tears and hurt. This is because she must retract her distance from the object of her anger--it is too frightening to be separate and alone. "Expressing hurt draws the object close

group, (3) clowning, (4) in-group aggression, (5) sympathy for all victims, (6) symbolic status-striving and (7) neuroticism. Extrapunitive persons turn their anger outward but express it indirectly through such behaviors as slyness, cunning, competitiveness and neuroticism. See Diane Carter, "Counseling Divorced Women," Personnel and Guidance Journal 55, no. 9 (1977): 537-41.

³ Jeanne Maracek, "Powerlessness and Women's Psychological Disorders," Voices 12, no. 3 (Fall 1976): 50-66.

⁴ Harriet Goldhor Lerner, Women in Therapy (Northvale, N.J.: Aronson, 1988), 64.

and emphasizes his or her importance to the self. Hurt in contrast to anger, emphasizes the relational "we" rather than the autonomous "I."⁵ Anger, when it does surface, may come out in passive-aggressive ways, or in ways that involve indirect conflict rather than open confrontation.

Often associated with the traditional female is the concept of what constitutes the hysterical personality. Harriet Lerner discusses the evolution of the concept of the hysteric, writing that the feminine character has been acculturated to have the very intellectual characteristics which psychiatrists have then labeled hysteric:

Purportedly as a result of pervasive reliance on repression, the cognitive style of the hysteric is a dramatically nonintellectual one characterized by a lack of concern with intellectual achievement, productivity, and mastery. . . . There is little investment in abstract and complex ideas, a flippant disregard for factual and technical information, and an inability to perform effectively on tasks demanding these skills. Independent and critical thinking is impaired and the general mode of cognition is fuzzy, global and undifferentiated. Hunch and intuition may replace active effortful thought and concentration. Because intellectual activity and mastery are continuously avoided, the hysteric's thinking has been described as naive, egocentric, unreflective, affect-laden, and cliché-ridden.⁶

Lerner goes on to point out that females are taught that an independent and masterful intellectual style is unattractive, and women who do cultivate critical intellect are considered castrating or masculine. She cites much

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 108-9.

research concerning how the "feminine character" and the "hysterical character" are synonymous. Lerner quotes Kreps who describes the traditional female role:

She is exhorted to play out the role of Cinderella, expecting fortune and happiness from some Prince Charming, rather than to venture out by herself. Be pretty, be pleasant, use mouthwash and deodorant, never have an intellectual thought, and Prince Charming will sweep you off to his castle where you will live happily ever after.⁷

The problem of cultural norms and descriptions of hysteria are so profound that Lerner concludes her chapter on hysteria calling for an elimination of the diagnosis itself:

As I now see it, the tone of my own writing on this subject is problematic, reflecting my absorption of cultural norms that devalue traditional feminine traits and behaviors and overvalue traditional masculine ones. We might just as well construct a "personality disorder" for those disturbed persons who manifest a preference for ideas over people, work over love, ambition over family responsibility, ideation over emotion, intellect over intuition, separateness over interdependency, distance over intimacy, competition over collaboration, and so forth. Obviously, this disorder would occur predominantly in men.⁸

It must be added that although Schaef equates codependence with the traditional female role constriction and prescriptions, she takes the opposite point of view from Lerner's on hysteria. Schaef calls for a diagnostic category of

⁷ B. Kreps, "The New Feminist Analysis," Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation, ed. S. Firestone (New York: Radical Feminism, 1970), 8; Harriet Lerner, 111.

⁸ Ibid., 117.

codependence as a disease.⁹

Other characteristic problems women have at this phase are anxiety, chronic fatigue and problems with self-hatred and depression that come from a primary identity wrapped up in taking care of men and shared children. One woman, M., questioned her mother concerning what M. recalled as her mother's chronic depression while M. was growing up. Her mother responded that she didn't think she had been depressed. "But I remember your crying all the time," M. said. "Of course I cried all the time," replied her mother. "I was raising five young children!"

In terms of women's spiritual journeying during this phase, I have noted from clinical experience and from the literature that this tends to be associated with a goal of pleasing God, usually imaged as father or male lover. The virtue is submission to God's will and there is a distinct

⁹ Anne Wilson Schaef, Codependence. While I appreciate much of Schaef's early work, I find some of her latter theories disconcerting. I do not agree that codependence is a disease. Part of the problem is our labeling of many of women's problems in living as disease. I have worked with intensive out-patient programs "treating" persons who consider themselves to have problems with codependency and for some people they have proved very helpful. On the other hand, it is my clinical experience that one may be involved in a codependent relationship as an isolated relationship; one's other relationships need not be characterized by those particular patterns nor do all subsequent ones need be. I have also noted that a tendency to have codependent patterns of relationships, especially with primary males, is what the current notion of romantic love is considered to be. This is particularly true for teenage girls, and it may tend to continue into later years as well. Treatment of codependence without a feminist analysis of the over-arching societal pressures to behave codependently, especially for women, especially for Christians, is inadequate.

preference for discussing virtue in terms of obedience. A society whose sense of virtue is conceptualized in terms of conforming to God's will can easily begin to associate that with conformity to the status quo, as Dorothee Soelle has illustrated so well.¹⁰ Rosemary Ruether speaks of traditional spirituality in terms of an exclusively masculine symbol of the divine, usually triumphalistic and imperialistic; a hierarchical understanding of power and the order of creation and a dualism which values the spirit and devalues the body and the historical.

The virtue is obedience and conformity to the will of God and the status quo and it involves self-sacrifice.¹¹ When obedience is the virtue, compulsive perfection is the responsibility victims place on themselves. Trapped between a feeling of powerlessness so that problems seem overwhelming and impossible to change, in striving for perfection, the victim "attempts to pacify the forces she cannot control in the world."¹² Miriam Greenspan contends that compulsive perfectionism characterizes the oppressed, sharing her personal story.

As a child, I used to feel that if only I were good enough, the overwhelming sorrow that my parents suffered as victims of the Holocaust would

¹⁰ Soelle, Beyond Mere Obedience.

¹¹ In addition to the already discussed argument against the term "self-sacrifice," using Soelle's concept of fulfillment, Sara Hoagland gives an important discussion of the problematic "virtue" of female self-sacrifice. Hoagland, 86-100.

¹² Greenspan, 201.

disappear. This was more than an internalization of my parents' hope that their children would somehow redeem their agony. It was also my way of wishing, as a child, that I could have personally spared my parents that agony. . . . For the victim of social oppression, the self at least appears to be under one's individual control, whereas the social world most certainly doesn't. The psychic struggle for self-perfection is thus an attempt to feel in control, rather than to feel helpless.¹³

Other virtues in this phase are order, punctuality, cleanliness, economy and diligence for its own sake. Our society demands obedience from children, obedience and abstinence from youth, obedience and selflessness from women and struggle for accomplishment from men. But obedience and unhappiness go hand in hand. Soelle connects the spiritual poverty that goes along with constantly living in opposition to one's self. She warns that the psychic masochism of the obedient person may at first express itself as a pleasant feeling that accompanies suffering but later the subconscious must "vindicate itself for that which is inflicted upon it."¹⁴

Ever since Valerie Saiving wrote her famous article, "The Human Situation,"¹⁵ feminist theologians have spoken about the problems involved with utilizing androcentric definitions of sin as the Niebuhrian concepts of pride and

¹³ Ibid., 200.

¹⁴ Ibid., 37.

¹⁵ Valerie Saiving, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," in Christ and Plaskow, 25-42.

rebellion. Alternatively, since women have been defined by culture and defined exclusively in terms of affiliations with men and male-dominated institutions, women's sin is named more adequately as denying their worth as persons in their own right. But in order to have that concept of sin one must have moved beyond a sense that virtue is acquiescence to the status quo and stereotypical notions as to what virtue is for women. In fact, women, along with other oppressed groups, have a terrible resistance to seeing their oppression clearly. Unless there is a commensurate ability to fight that subordination, one can only be easily overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problem. To combat oppression one must feel worthwhile. Women are socialized to value others, not themselves. Women are to value others, particularly men, not themselves. Similarly, self-esteem is the province of men, not women.¹⁶

If obedience is a prize virtue, then it makes sense that an authoritarian religion might be the spirituality of choice, especially insofar as one might choose such a denomination or religion over another, or have a chance to make a selection in and among many ways of relating spiritually. An authoritarian religion is a particular strain of religion--whether Islamic, fundamentalist Protestant or Roman Catholic, Pentecostal--which has rules and regulations, one which provides simple, clear and concrete answers

¹⁶ Greenspan, 187.

to the terrifying questions of today, and one which clearly defines women's roles, usually going so far as to decree such roles as God's will or at least attributing such to human nature. Perhaps chief among these within the Protestant groups are those who consider themselves part of the Fundamentalist Right, New Right or Good News movement. In all of these the official position is "pro-family" with the traditional stereotypical values for women.

Questions are asked concerning whether fundamentalism can be defined as psychopathological in general. Yao is one researcher who takes the stand that regardless of particular religious content, fundamentalists display a certain set of traits which are "a diseased way of processing reality." He lists them as follows:

- A. An inability to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty in life, manifested by painting everything in black and white, right and wrong, good and evil.
- B. A desire for simplistic, "quick fixes" for problems involving marriage, children, sexuality, or society;
- C. An extreme dogmatism that demands homogeneity and refuses to tolerate differing viewpoints;
- D. A compulsion to impose itself on the rest of society; and
- E. Massive denial that is fostered by belief in "a world of fantasy."¹⁷

These traits are similar to those which describe authoritarian religion: "traits of submissiveness to authority

¹⁷ R. Yao, There is a Way Out (New York: Luce, 1986), as listed in Gary W. Hartz and Henry C. Everett, "Fundamentalist Religion and Its Effect on Mental Health," Journal of Religion and Health 28, no. 3 (Fall 1989): 208.

figures; rigid, stereotypical differentiation of 'them' versus 'us'; hostility toward excluded groups; and a high degree of social conventionality."¹⁸ A number of religious groups may be discussed in terms of authoritarian elements with congregations featuring "control-oriented leadership, isolationist attitudes, discouragement of dissent and life-style rigidity." Ultraconservative Protestant groups, Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons fit here, as do some groups from orthodox Catholicism, Islamic fundamentalism and Hasidic Judaism.¹⁹ While researchers debate issues of whether or not fundamentalism itself is psychopathological, many ignore the question of what the role of women is prescribed to be in such religions, the degree to which women are held to be subordinant and the resistance within those religions to the patriarchal mindset.

Andrea Dworkin has written about how it is women might find the kind of religion that characterizes the political Right in the United States helpful.²⁰ Dworkin notes how certain metaphysical and material promises exploit women's deepest fear, in particular the fear that men's violence against women is uncontrollable and unpredictable. She

¹⁸ E. A. Shils, "Authoritarianism: 'Right' and 'Left,'" quoted in Hartz and Everett, 215-6.

¹⁹ Ibid., 209.

²⁰ Andrea Dworkin, "'Safety, Shelter, Rules, Form and Love': The Promises of the Ultra-Right," Ms. (June 1979): 62-72.

discusses how it is that an authoritarian religion promises form against chaos, shelter, safety, rules and love.

By form Dworkin means the kind of simple, fixed, pre-determined social, biological and sexual order prescribed by authoritarian religions which conquers the modern chaos experienced by many women who have been kept ignorant of much of technology, economics and practical skills needed to function in today's increasingly complex society. Such an order aids women who have been excluded summarily from the places where women could develop intellectual acumen and self-confidence. Preying upon women's fear that without a man they will be homeless, the Right promises shelter to women if they will only follow their prescribed role within the home. Similarly, safety is promised to women who experience the world as a dangerous place wherein one wrong move can bring assault, shame, or disgrace. If women will only remain obedient to the men in their lives and to male institutions in general, including the church, then they will not be harmed. To learn the rules is simply to follow through on them by rote, unquestioningly and loyally. It is implied that men of that faith group will also follow through on the rules. Finally, women are offered what they want the most: love. And if by chance, the men are not able to love her in return for all of her obedience, the love of Jesus is offered, "beautiful brother, tender lover, compassionate friend, perfect healer of sorrow and resentment, the

one male to whom one can submit absolutely--be Woman as it were--without being sexually violated or psychologically abused."²¹

Dworkin's analysis goes beyond Phase I religion because it elucidates why it is women take on patriarchal values at all, even when they are at odds with their own well-being upon deeper analysis. Women around the world have an urgent need to survive and this almost always means on male terms.

So the woman hangs on, not with the delicacy of a clinging vine, but with a tenacity incredible in its intensity, to the very persons, institutions and values that demean her, degrade her, glorify her powerlessness, insist upon constraining and paralyzing the most honest expressions of her will and being. She becomes a lackey, serving those who ruthlessly and effectively aggress against her and her kind. This singularly self-hating loyalty to those committed to her own destruction is the very essence of womanhood as men of all ideological persuasions define it.²²

Not surprisingly, women whose goal is to please God and the men around them often have trouble moving away from men who batter them. The most oppressive elements of patriarchal religion are used time and again to persuade them to remain in battering situations, as Marie Fortune and Rita-Lou Clarke articulated so well.²³ Susan Jeansonne speaks about her spiritual journey in Racette and Reynolds'

²¹ Ibid., 62.

²² Ibid., 70.

²³ See Rita-Lou Clarke, Pastoral Care of Battered Women (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986); and Marie Fortune, Keeping the Faith: Questions and Answers for the Abused Woman (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

compendium of American women's spirituality.²⁴ Raised as a Roman Catholic, she wanted to have a good Christian marriage. Although fearful of her fiance's drinking patterns, she married him anyway, since the invitations were already sent out. "As long as you had a good attitude, whatever happened between husband and wife was part of God's plan for that marriage," she assumed. During the fourteen years of being married she was beaten by her husband. At first she prayed constantly, expecting a "thunderbolt." She read the lives of saints and learned that they found joy in suffering, but she did not. Later she read Fromm's The Art of Loving, Rogers' On Becoming a Person and Missildine's Your Inner Child of the Past. She sought help from a counselor who encouraged her to remain in a bad marriage. At one point her husband held a gun to her head, cocked, for one-and-a-half hours. During that break, her image of God changed. In that near-death experience she felt God really wanted her to live, that there was a purpose in her life and that God was friend rather than father. She was later able to divorce her husband and find a psychiatrist who would help her put together a theology for battered women. Speaking of the change in her spirituality, she states,

I think what a woman has to do is to make the decision to be a person. It must be done in a balanced way, but it isn't a selfless decision. As long as I saw myself as a creature of God that was loved and had value . . . without that it might seem easier to stay. The change is threat-

²⁴ Racette and Reynolds, 9-19.

ening. All the things I scared myself with, Virgil reinforced, and I was saying, "Yes he must be right." Without having had the spiritual experience, that I was not completely worthless, that there was some good in me, that God loves me, I would not have survived.²⁵

This kind of metamorphosis from feeling worthless to finding some modicum of self-esteem and its relation to the oppressive interpretations and elements of patriarchal religion is discussed in and through the lives of many women. Anita Bryant finally divorced her fundamentalist husband and confessed to years of "smoldering resentments against the anti-woman dictates of the fundamentalist preachers whose hysterical crusade against homosexual rights she had fronted for in Florida."²⁶ Sherry Burgdorf, now the Minneapolis Coordinator of Fundamentalists Anonymous tells her story of growing up in a dysfunctional family system and finding fundamentalism helped her at first with her "need for security, the need to know the system, the need to be right with God, the need for assurance. . . ."²⁷ She was able to change her religious viewpoint only when the inconsistencies of what she was told and what she was experiencing came home to her, especially in light of what fundamentalism was encouraging her children to believe (enabling

²⁵ Ibid., 18.

²⁶ Her story is discussed in Betty Friedan, The Second Stage, (New York: Summit, 1981).

²⁷ Burgdorf's story and Virginia Mollenkott's are found in "Unmasking the Religious Right," CALC Report 8, nos.3-4 (n.d.): 53-70.

them to believe that god is in favor of "wife abuse, child abuse, exploitation of natural resources, censorships and war for the settling of religious conflicts, especially with the Russians").

Virginia Mollenkott describes her spiritual journey as one of moving on from a fundamentalist belief system, which she states masquerades as a religion based on a "profound personal experience of God in Jesus Christ," but is "essentially a rationalistic and almost completely cognitive form of religion."²⁸ She was isolated from her feeling, and the easy answers, taught to her from her childhood, denuded her life of mystery and awe. Total obedience was required by her Biblical fundamentalist mentors. "In my own case," she writes, "obedience included advice to go ahead and get married and pretend I was heterosexual because the feelings would follow. They didn't." She makes the point that persons stuck in authoritarian religious stances do so out of fear and inner dissonance. The inner dissonance comes about because they are, men and women, forced to believe what they are told the Bible says, even if their instincts and feelings deny this. Of course this is more difficult for women who are taught to distrust their feelings in the first place and to never question authority.

Dorothee Soelle came out of a different religious tradition, but nevertheless had to confront the God of

²⁸ Ibid., 63.

traditional liberal Christianity as portrayed in her youth. She writes that she began to have difficulties with God as father, begetter, ruler and manager of history as she grew to understand more clearly what it meant to be a woman, and therefore "incomplete," living under conditions of patriarchal society. How could she worship a God whose main attribute was power, when power for her was associated with booming male voices, yelling, giving orders and shooting? At one point she participated in the "God is dead" movement because she could not sincerely believe in a powerful God who could "look at Auschwitz, tolerate it, participate in it, observe it, or whatever. If he is all-powerful, then he is devoid of love. Such was my conclusion."²⁹

Her theology became one of "religionless Christianity" and she developed a God who is nonauthoritarian and a powerless Christ who "has nothing but love, who exerts no power, has no armies to call on, shouts no one down as God did Job out of the whirlwind, who has nothing with which to save us but his love." With a growing sense of feminism, she refused any God image that would require any "identification whatsoever with the aggressor," that is

with someone who comes from outside me, subjugates me, and then goes on to tell me that this is just the way things should be, that this is the state preordained for me--any identification with such an aggressor is the worst disaster that can befall a woman. And it is befalling millions.

²⁹ Soelle, Strength of the Weak, 98.

She writes that the image of a kindly father whose power is tempered by mercy will not help women or men:

A kindly slaveholder may be loved and honored by his slaves, and this is the form that female piety basically takes, as I mentioned before: submission to the roles that God has ordained for women. That is the equivalent to knuckling under to a kindly, well-meaning father. But submission and obedience destroy our possibilities to become human beings, and I know from the history of my country and from the sexism of the dominant culture that a father figure cannot liberate us."³⁰

Finally with regard to women accepting patriarchal definitions--women who are at odds with themselves--Soelle makes it clear that the secret wishes of a person play at least as great a role in determining who she is as does her conscious will. When unrecognized or suppressed feelings of rage and anger at the situation of condemning herself to secondary status and no-bodiness result in a spiritual poverty--this can only be inflicted upon others with a vengeance, often in the form of perpetrating other hierarchical prejudicial notions such as Anita Bryant did in her crusade against gay men and lesbian women. A psychic masochism will one day result in sadism. A willingness to act sacrificially is destructive, says Soelle, and a person's subconscious must vindicate itself sooner or later, for that which is inflicted upon it.³¹

³⁰ Ibid., 99-100.

³¹ Soelle, Beyond Mere Obedience, 37.

A word about pastoral counseling with women in Phase I. Frequently women will come in complaining of depression. As they begin to tell their story and get in touch with their feelings, anger emerges. The most important thing is to listen. Virginia Mollenkott also advises this listening: a kind of listening and reflecting that does not argue back with the client but allows for her own argumentation to be heard by herself as she gets in touch with the dissonance between her experience and what her faith claims have been. Raising questions about how religion has functioned in their life can be helpful only after trust has been established. Textual interpolations must be approached very carefully it is important to point out to clients that "to deny the human aspect of Scripture is as erroneous as denying the human aspect of Jesus."³² Raising respectful but insistent questions about the whole intent of scripture may be helpful. But most important, asking the woman to discuss her own faith journey and belief system in light of real life situations is crucial for helping her see in what direction she needs to move in her spiritual growth.

It may be hard for a feminist pastoral counselor to work with a traditionally-defined woman. It is sometimes difficult for any feminists to deal with women who "adamantly and vociferously oppose what we are trying to do for all of us . . . some women seem fanatical and frantic in

³² "Unmasking the Religious Right," 70.

their desperation to keep on being submissive, silent, and unequal."³³ Understanding is the key to compassion. Most often fear undergirds their traditional viewpoints--fear concerning what they may have lost if it turns out they have lost it unnecessarily, and fear of what may lie ahead if there is another world view. In therapy, calling up a woman's self-esteem and self-respect requires that one model that respect for her as an individual and as a woman.³⁴

Just as women begin to feel powerful, often they begin to revert to bad feelings about themselves. This is because our society teaches us that power is not feminine. There is a pull back to helplessness and religious views that assert and affirm women's lack of power. Greenspan notes that when this happens in therapy, a woman needs to realize that progress is indeed being made; and some of the more entrenched patterns of powerless behavior may be on the verge of breaking down. When women begin to question their own sense of helplessness, then they often begin to question the role of women in society, and then the world that has been androcentrically constructed. At that point, nothing is quite the same.

³³ Patricia Gundry, "Uncomfortable Women," Daughters of Sarah (Nov.-Dec. 1989): 13.

³⁴ See Sari Dworkin, "Traditionally Defined Client, Meet Feminist Therapist: Feminist Therapy as Attitude Change," Personnel and Guidance Journal (Jan. 1984): 301-5.

Phase II. Male-Identified

This is a phase I call male-identified but other terms, such as liberated woman, new woman or superwoman are variously used by feminists writers who speak to issues involved here. In this phase a woman begins to reject the stereotypically feminine and move toward being successful in traditionally male ways. Again, the definitions of women's being and behavior here are decided on the basis of patriarchal values. Often white women in high-powered male-dominated careers are considered the superwomen, the liberated women, but "problems arise in measuring women's progress primarily in terms of participation in movements created and led by men," writes Margaret Bendroth.³⁵ Pre-occupation with women in male-dominated professions, Gerda Lerner reminds us, continually reinforces the point that "man is the measure of significance."³⁶ Rather than limit women in this phase to those who hold high-powered careers, a better sense is to discuss, once again, the phase in terms of what are its values, its center, goal, extremes, illnesses, spirituality, sins and virtue.

Maureen Murdock, in "Women of Two Worlds: The Return Trip to the Feminine," writes of doing therapy with women,

³⁵ Margaret Bendroth, "Millennial Themes and Private Visions: The Problem of 'Woman's Place' in Religious History," Fides et Historia 20, no. 2 (June 1988): 26.

³⁶ Gerda Lerner, The Majority Finds Its Past (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 169.

particularly women who are between thirty and fifty years of age,³⁷ describing the women's movement from the embrace of the stereotypical male hero's journey, as defined by Joseph Campbell as a return to the feminine. Murdock tends to use Jungian archetypes and concepts, nevertheless, her concept of moving from the pseudo-male to embracing a more woman-identified stance is important.

Women may move from Phase I and enter into Phase II. Lately this may be happening as a matter of course for many girls in high school; and some social scientists are wondering if we are not socializing little girls in the United States today to function out of the so-called liberated woman value system. In either case, the values differ from those of Phase I. Whereas the first phase is characterized by wanting to be taken care of, refusing to fully use mental abilities and lacking self-esteem to follow through on one's intentions and a lack of self-awareness, Phase II women usually have learned that they have good intellectual capacities and know that, in some sense, they must take care of themselves. Their self and their work tends to be at the center of their existence, though the whole notion of the possibility of "having it all" has not yet been abandoned. In this case a woman may want the best for herself, her home, her family, and her career and presume that it is

³⁷ Maureen Murdock, "Woman of Two Worlds: The Return Trip to the Feminine" (TS., 1981).

possible for her to achieve success in all areas. Other women have decided not to be married and to forego having children, concentrating solely on their career goals instead.

Again, this phase is dominated by androcentric values; it is the patriarchy that defines who the new woman is to be. Greenspan describes the so-called liberated woman's values in terms of discriminate boundaries, intelligence, competence; a capacity for hard work, team loyalty and discipline; a keen business sense, a "pure" academic and a tight and trim athletic body. She states that the super-woman is yet another fantasy of what a woman should be in the era of feminism.

The New Woman, we are told, has put her old patterns of dependence and subservience behind her and has embraced a new, "liberated" life-style. If she is single she enjoys her newfound sense of freedom from domestic dependence. If she is married, her husband is the New Man: someone who shares the housework and child rearing and is equal partner in life. The New Woman manages to juggle family and career without falling on her face. . . . she is soft, vulnerable, and sexy (like the Old Woman) but she is also competent, assertive, and tough (like the Old Man). The New Woman is physically alluring and mentally able. She is not working-class. She has a high-powered career from which she derives a great deal of self-esteem. Nor is she a lesbian. She likes men, but she doesn't cling to them the way that the Old Woman did. Like a man, she values her independence above all else.³⁸

Beverly Harrison notes the rugged individualism of super-women, calling them "Queen B's" or token women in male

³⁸ Greenspan, 287.

systems who do not acknowledge dependence on other women for their success, often disdaining other women in competition.

Maureen Murdock writes that such women

have defined themselves for so long in relation to the masculine as daughters, mothers, wives, sisters, lovers, (they) often follow patriarchal rules and guidelines in seeking academic and professional success as well. They find themselves picking up the sword, putting on their armor and emulating the solo hero's quest.³⁹

Interestingly, black women have often had to fulfill one version of the superwoman role since they have had to work outside the home, raise the children and keep the household going, often without the help of a spouse. At the same time, they have not been credited for being superwomen, rather they have been maligned for being "matriarchs." Furthermore, when white women aspire to superwoman status, they often delegate the housework and child care to women from the so-called Third World racial backgrounds without either revaluing the kind of caretaking roles they perform nor paying them appropriately.

The goal here is still to please parents and God, although pleasing mentors is added to the configuration. In rejecting the stereotypical female values of Phase I, women move toward male allies and often, leading with their minds and inexhaustive energy, prove themselves through some rite of male initiation. This may mean "managing one's own life," building a business, achieving independence, working

³⁹ Murdock, 2.

and mothering, going back to school and juggling all of these with an outward look of finesse. Often there is a "boon" period when achievement is indeed at its peak. Usually deep inside, however, a gnawing sense of low self-esteem continues which takes the form of feeling that one has "fooled everyone," that she is really a fraud and the next project is as precarious as the first--for surely it will fail and everyone will know her true self. Feelings, however, must be forced down in order to function in such "superhuman" ways, fulfilling so many demands. "What happened on the road to liberation is that women didn't travel far enough," writes Murdock. "They learned how to be successful according to the masculine model, but that model does not satisfy the need to be a whole person."⁴⁰ Rather than embracing androcentric values, women need to come up with their own individual values; to listen deeply to their own bodies, attune to their own hearts as well as their heads. What is needed is "a consciousness manifesto," writes Nancy Passmore,

an awareness (however momentary) to help us discredit archaic systems of belief . . . this is not an act of will, but a coming into alignment. . . . When experience and thought are one, consciousness changes.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁴¹ Nancy F.W. Passmore, "A Consciousness Manifesto," in Spretnak, The Politics, 170.

The extremes here are alienation of self and others, isolation, and a sense of superiority which covers the tentative feelings of what feels to the woman like momentary and discrete successes. If the woman doesn't exhibit the proper deference to males, especially in the hierarchy or in collegial relationships, she may be seen as threateningly intellectual, vengeful, ferocious or castrating.⁴² Envy is sometimes a problem for women in this phase; women may be envious of her and she may be envious of others. However, envy, write Eichenbaum and Orbach, is a woman's longing or yearning which reveals a belief that she will never achieve fulfillment, acceptance or recognition for herself.⁴³ Sometimes women may throw off the shackles of relatedness in an effort to free herself from emotional responsibility to anyone else but herself. In this case the task of therapy is not to hold up the values of male styles of competition and individualism, but is to encourage relationships which are mutual and enhancing for all parties, not subservient. Women do need to claim their power. Unfortunately, even after they have claimed some power, traditional therapists have dealt them another blow of blame-the-victim: they say she has not yet pursued all the options to change their situation. The myth of the exceptional woman is kept alive

⁴² Harriet Lerner, citing Bernardez, 61.

⁴³ Eichenbaum and Orbach, 145.

by the media, TV talk shows and series, advertisements and magazine feature stories.

The kinds of diseases therapists note go along with the kinds of stresses the superwoman syndrome produces. Depression continues to be a major problem, but anxiety may be the foremost complaint.⁴⁴ Process addictions to work, money, and success help keep a woman one-pointed in goals and away from her inner child and feelings. Ingestive substances (alcohol, drugs and food) all serve, at least at first, to keep feelings at bay. Women continue to have problems with relationships here, especially with men. Unlike Phase I, women will enter therapy in order to "try to get over my dependency on men." Like Phase I, women still believe they are primarily responsible for making any relationship succeed. A major problem for women here is finding men to emotionally match heterosexual women's independence.⁴⁵ Obsessive-compulsive personality problems with their relentless driving anxiety also find their home in Phase II.

The spirituality that undergirds this phase is one that venerates perfection. "Be ye perfect as your father in heaven is perfect" could serve as the credo. Carol Christ calls women here "daughters of the father god."⁴⁶ The emphasis is on the transcendent spirit, permanence and

⁴⁴ Becker, 9.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 294.

⁴⁶ Carol Christ, Laughter, 93.

identity. The greatest sin is imperfection. Making mistakes and being in process are all anathema. In therapy, superwomen come in for a quick-fix, often to get help with some "minor" problem that is beginning to hinder them in their pursuit of professional or personal perfection. There is also a great fear that they will not live up to the expectations of their role. They are afraid not to be superwomen, not to be stoic, not to absorb all the pain. They fear the accusatory voices that ring in their ears: "I told you so, independence would be too hard for you, a man's world is just too rough. . . ." ⁴⁷

Betty Friedan has called this so-called liberated woman phase "the new feminine mystique."

The broader question, in the second stage, is this: Will women, in a new assertion of the priority of human values, which goes back to their traditional feminine roots, join men in resisting dehumanizing and, in the end, counterproductive corporate pressures to "produce," or will they become even more slavish robots to the obsolete workaholic time clock than men? ⁴⁸

Friedan then points to some studies of women, single and married, with and without children, whose days are spent with rounds of incessant activity, rarely having sex, working long hours and very worried about death. ⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Becker, 7.

⁴⁸ Friedan, 215.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 216.

The problem is that given patriarchal structures and institutions, it is impossible for women to "have it all." There is not enough support, nor enough humanitarian sense within the various institutions of most workplaces, nor within the institutions of motherhood and committed relationships as commonly known for this to be possible. Without a doubt, flextime, more opportunities for good child care, part-time work and job sharing would ease things considerably. But the problem is deeper than this. Greenspan reminds us that there is really no such thing as a liberated woman today:

In short, women as a group are not yet equal to men as a group in our society. In this sense, the real liberated woman has not yet come into existence. Without the socioeconomic changes necessary to accommodate her needs, she will not do so. Feminism will be yet another value system, rather than an instrument of overall social transformation. In a society not yet committed to reorganizing the structures of social institutions to meet women's needs, the Liberated Superwoman's task (to succeed in the way that men have, while continuing to succeed in traditional feminine ways as well) is barely possible.⁵⁰

Not only will the new woman find it hard to live out such a life, but the simple moving of women into the public sphere, especially into jobs previously held by men is not a solution to the subordination of women. As Paula Cooley writes,

Unless women transform the public, patriarchal institutions of which they become a part, and until we redefine the meaning of 'public' and

⁵⁰ Greenspan, 101.

'private' in nonpatriarchal terms, the social order will remain patriarchal.⁵¹

In the meantime, most women in Phase II cling to the belief that if they would just try hard enough, want it badly enough, organize her life better, and go the extra mile, they can achieve any goal they set before themselves.⁵² Once again, the problem arises: who defines the goal? If it is not the woman herself, then she is automatically at odds with herself and her own value system. If she has unconsciously and uncritically embraced unhealthy goals set for her by the status quo, the sooner or later, something has to give. It is usually a woman's health, primary relationships or emotional balance.

Break: Critical Phase of Transition

At some point in a woman's "hero's quest" (even occasionally not long after the pinnacle of success or boon), something may happen that pushes her over the edge of the threshold. A quiet, orderly move into Phase III is highly unusual. Paula Cooley explains why this is so:

Liberation in this context involves a shattering of self-deception, an extremely painful experience, for it smashes what is at least an illusion of power. In other words, empowerment, experienced as liberation from oppression, often involves a transformation from suffering, disguised as power, to undisguised, raw and painful

⁵¹ Cooley, "Power of Transformation," 28.

⁵² Books like Marjorie Hansen Shaevitz, The Superwoman Syndrome (New York: Warner, 1984), written initially to help women "trying to do it all--how to decide what's important in your life and do it well"--in fact reinforce the idea that one can control one's life in such a way as to have it all.

suffering. The interaction between suffering and power in the movement from what becomes a false identity to integrity or, more accurately, a glimpse of integrity is, thus, extremely difficult."⁵³

The break may involve an experience of burn-out due to overwork or stress, it may come about due to physical illness, divorce, or some kind of personal crisis. Whatever the trigger, there is an awakening to a sense of aridity, meaninglessness and a sense of having sold-out to alien values. The key to the transformation is a shattering of what appears to have been one's identity and it often culminates in the integration of the personal with a communal identity, a process often made possible by the community in which transformation takes place.⁵⁴ The desolation that comes with the realization that one has been playing by someone else's set of rules cannot be underestimated. Some women withdraw completely from society, preferring to garden, bake, take a sabbatical. Often the woman cries a lot and no longer values independence, feeling instead the need to be mothered and taken care of. Sylvia Perera has called this the "descent to the Goddess" and describes the experience as being one of "raw meat, hanging on a meathook." Cheryl Purdue notes this is a deathlike experience when a woman experiences a letting go of much of what she previously valued--valued on male terms and through patri-

⁵³ Cooley, "Suffering," 135.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 136.

archal eyes. Unlike transformation discussed in the New Age literature of coming into the light, this is one of coming into the darkness. Traditional spiritual mysticism language may describe it best as a "dark night of the soul," but what one experiences is not evil, as one client told me, "it's dark and monstrous and juicy, but it's not evil." Many of the women's stories on their faith journey discuss this break. Women scholars of religion talk about meditation and solitude, certain readings and getting in touch with feelings as triggering the break, as does writing a book or an article. Toor speaks about a break that occurred in her life when she fell in love with a man who was not her husband. She realized she had sublimated her authentic self and "experienced a crisis at the relational level that was also a profound spiritual crisis."

Because for so many years I had both tended and hidden the split between thinking and feeling, and consequently between flesh and spirit, I had become polarized. Half of me was a spiritual devotee and in control of my life, and the other half was a woman who had simply pacified a wounded child. . . . From one day to the next nothing was predictable, and the safe and known world of the past gave way to the emergence of the more cloistered elements of my nature. I gave myself permission to feel, to be vulnerable, to break past my defenses, to rage and cry, to laugh in the midst of chaos and to learn to live with paradox.⁵⁵

Throughout her book, Toor gives examples of clients who went through a kind of break in identity. One example is a woman who, after completing her studies for her Ph.D., returned

⁵⁵ Toor, 22-3.

home, only to find that everything inside her felt bleak and empty.

I stopped sleeping well and began to awaken in the middle of the night with a feeling of restlessness, almost a kind of panic. I felt like I was standing right on the edge of some incredible precipice about to go over. "Great," I said to myself, "now that you've got your Ph.D. you're going nuts."⁵⁶

She realized that what had happened was that she had become to "top-heavy," too driven in her life.

Time and again, women move from Phase II with a sense of rupture. Christine Downing went from superwoman into a break that came about due to an affair which resulted in her lover's wife's breakdown. "I, in turn, had a serious breakdown as I came to terms with how badly I wounded this other woman. I came very close to killing myself." Her recovery led to a loosening of a father identification, both familial and in terms of God, which had bound her so long.⁵⁷ Rita Gross' break occurred when her lover had an inoperable brain tumor and "the coemergence of my misery and the beauty of the world snapped something in my mind." From then on the four noble truths of Buddhism were true for her, and she became a Buddhist with feminism as her main concern.⁵⁸ Rosemary Ruether is one who appears not to have experienced a break, but one who was "implicitly always a feminist, if

⁵⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁵⁷ Meadow and Rayburn, 59.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 43.

by being a feminist one means a woman who fights for her full realization and accepts no special barriers to her aspirations on the basis of sexual identity." In her book Disputed Questions, Ruether says she can remember even as a small child, "an instinctive rejection of efforts to define me in traditional female roles."⁵⁹ Her personal God image is female, her model of divine being more that of "cosmic matrix" than transcendent "phallic act."⁶⁰ Similarly, Brock doesn't discuss a major break, but prefers to talk about the experience of God/dess, especially as experienced in and through women's spirituality groups.⁶¹

Kim Chernin, in Reinventing Eve,⁶² describes her male-identification phase in the following way:

I had to be pried away from my allegiance to rationality and logic, from my tendency to identify with the male heroes in the novels I read, from my pride in being able (it was said of me) to hold my own intellectually with me which meant talking and thinking in the way they found most comfortable. . . . I was a woman who had learned how to reason abstractly. I did not want to surrender to an experience guided by strong feeling and intuitive promptings, both of which I associated in a contemptuous and disparaging way with women.⁶³

⁵⁹ Rosemary Ruether, Disputed Questions: On Being a Christian (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), 109.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 137.

⁶¹ Brock, x, xii.

⁶² Kim Chernin, Reinventing Eve: Modern Woman in Search of Herself (New York: Random, 1987).

⁶³ Ibid., 3.

Later she realized her unhappiness and despondency, an "urgent dissatisfaction" which led to a break, "the beginning of initiation."

It is a time of dislocation. One grows tired of one's favorite food, can't sleep at night, gives up on the books and music one loves best, loses interest in even the oldest and most loyal obsessions, stands up suddenly in the midst of conversations, walks about by oneself, writes down scraps of thought on scraps of paper, looks for counsel in familiar places, hears nothing worth listening to, frowns, alienates friends, eats too much or stops eating much at all, feels dreadfully tired and sick of it all, and at the same time, as if one were in a state of unbearable suspense, waiting for the phone to ring, for the mail to arrive, for that stranger to walk around the corner. And meanwhile, nothing happens and everything is just about to happen, and you are, you think, too old for this sort of thing, and then the despondency starts to grow and the anxiety becomes more acute and you know you're up against it, whatever it is. You can't turn back, have you gone forward? You can't go forward. Where is there to go?"⁶⁴

For Chernin, a religious experience of feeling one with nature, falling on her knees in an worshipful awe of a tree. It was hard to break her "addiction to holding the worldview the men of my time thought most plausible." She goes on,

Here I was a woman of the twentieth century, capable of making my own way in the world, presumably liberated but in reality chained by unquestioned assumptions about the way thinking was to take place and the world was to be experienced and I myself was to behave."⁶⁵

As she knelt before the tree, tears streaming down her face she was amazed at herself. "I, raised in a family of

⁶⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 6.

Marxist atheists, down on my knees, worshiping?" Later she connected her newfound spirituality with roots of her Jewish ancestry in an experience on a kibbutz; and subsequently her god images became female.⁶⁶

The break which occurs here necessitates a change not only in a sense of self but often in an image of God as well. This is because everything patriarchal begins to be called into question. The reason the experience is so intimidating is because one's entire cosmology is threatened.

Phase III. Woman-Identified

The literature coming out of feminist psychology and feminist theology has focused on the reality of the male as norm and the female as other, as counterpart. Pain and suffering has resulted as women have tried over centuries to live up to male standards of who they are, what they should value and how they should act in society. Religion itself has been defined by males and offered to women on an androcentric platter. Women are now writing about what it has been like to have been coopted into a patriarchal system and what it means to be a "stranger in a strange land." To make progress in the patriarchal system has almost always meant selling out, in some ways. Most importantly, women have expressed an eagerness to begin to define the world on their

⁶⁶ Through her relationship with a Jewish writer whose journal she read, Chernin was attracted to the notion that "god is that deepest and richest part of myself in which I repose."

own terms, both individually and collectively; as white women, lesbian women, black women, Latino women, Jewish women, Korean women, hearing-impaired women, etc. This means naming religious experience, renaming the deity and redefining the attributes and activities of such a deity, it means validating and valuing female experience and perceptions and revaluing women's religious experience; in particular feminist spirituality.

But when it comes to truly acting out a woman's sense of self, the territory is still fairly unknown. At a conference on Post-Patriarchy hosted by the Process Studies Center in Claremont, a group of women and men had difficulty describing exactly what our dreams entailed. We knew what we didn't want, what we found of diminishing value, but it is much more difficult to move from criticizing the old to building the new. This is a problem that exists for all of feminist theory. Analyzing the problems is simpler than creating solutions, if only because our immersion in patriarchal mindset, language and structures makes even the imagining of new solutions difficult.

In a woman-identified phase, both the sense of self and spirituality change. With movement toward a newfound feminist psychology a necessary corollary of change occurs within one's viewpoints on religion and spirituality. One study, "A Phenomenological Exploration of Feminism and Christian Orthodoxy," pointed out how

commitment to feminism led to expanded and more fluid images of God, a struggle in identifying with Jesus Christ and his salvific act on the cross, redefining and recreating doctrine, and tension with the institutional church of today.⁶⁷

Brock defines woman-identified as "the capacity to feel and envision justice for women on the basis of concrete relationships with real women, rather than on the predefined concepts of androcentric world views."⁶⁸ A feminist shift means a shift in values, as Hoagland points out so well in her book Lesbian Ethics. Rather than appeal to rules, regulations, principles or codes, she appeals to that which enables and facilitates individual integrity and agency in relations to others. Hoagland then discusses a variety of different emphases she sees important to lesbian community; arguing for one set of values over another, such as attending as opposed to paternalism, engaging as opposed to binding. She also calls into question any uncritical acceptance of "feminist" values of vulnerability, mothering, amazoning, nonviolence, and self-sacrifice.

In Phase III a self-identified woman is seeking to find her center in both creative work and in relationships. No

⁶⁷ Michael D. Roe, Carolina F. Warner and Shari R. Erickson, "A Phenomenological Exploration of Feminism and Christian Orthodoxy," Journal of Psychology and Christianity 5, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 30.

⁶⁸ Brock, Journeys, 67. As an example, she states that a feminist reformulation of christology must be one which is woman-identified; a christology of interconnection and action for justice, love, and peace, not of authority, heroism and proclamation.

longer is one relationship with a primary person the sole relationship around which all other relationships must become peripheral. Work need not be prestigious, but it must have a sense of being worthwhile to the woman, giving her a sense of accomplishment, creativity and making a difference in the world, in her life and in the lives of others. Opportunities for responsibility and care for others are often involved, as Gilligan notes. In Phase III women often reclaim the essential importance of their bodies, hold a renewed wonder and delight in the sensual and the sexual. A revaluing of intuition may come about and most women speak, as Chernin did, of a strong spiritual sense of the interconnection of all of life, especially themselves with the earth, seasons, nature and the cycles of life. An urgent yearning to connect the mind, body and spirit splits comes about through an intense interest in listening to the rhythms within one's own being. Whereas in Phase II women put their trust in leading their lives with their minds, in Phase III there is a leading with the heart. This is not to suggest that such women become anti-intellectual. To use the powers of the intellect is still important, yet there is a balance and a harmonization as women integrate other ways of knowing and experiencing the world rather than the ones most prized by the male establishment. Phase III celebrates paradox and doesn't insist that all truth be linear, systematic, cohesive and

noncontradictory. It celebrates independence and interrelatedness. J.B. Miller has named this combination "enlightened self-interest." Androgeny is not the goal here. I agree with Adrienne Rich, Charlene Spretnak and Carol Christ that androgeny is just another way of asking women to be clones of men as well as the best of what the female has to offer.⁶⁹ What is valued is what is most helpful for women, all of humanity and the earth. Gerda Lerner has written that however helpful patriarchal values have been in the past for producing some of the most important technological advances, for example, the time has come for those values to be outdated, as they are leading us no longer into better life, but into destruction of ourselves and our earth. Generally revalued are some of virtues once demeaned and devalued as being associated with the feminine; although as Hoagland has pointed out, these must not be nostalgically and uncritically deemed worthy simply because they have been socialized into female behavior. Both feminist psychology and theology tend to put stress on honoring the woman as her own guide, in particular as she grows in creativity, courage and wisdom.

The goal for this phase is fulfillment, in the sense that it includes an interdependency and mutuality, not a personal egoism. An acceptance of one's rootedness in

⁶⁹ Schneider, Conn and Carr all argue for androgyny as a concept that is still worthwhile.

finitude and of the transience of nature and the body grows in one's awareness. Deeply valued is woman-bonding (especially as it allows for particularity and diversity) and almost always there is a growing spiritual sense that nature is permeated with the sacred, that indeed all of life is permeated with the holy.

The extremes in this case come from the ramifications of the "earthquake phenomenon" as Mary Daly describes the process of making meanings outside of patriarchal expectations. One may attempt androgeny and try to be the best of all that is socialized to be male and all that is socialized to be female. This would necessitate a cycling back to Phase II at this point, for that is part of the definition of male-identified. Another problem, in my opinion, is separatism. One may attempt to separate as completely as possible from patriarchal culture ("hill lesbians"), or exclusivist radical lesbians. While one can certainly understand why and how it is that many women might want to do this, this leaves patriarchal structures unchanged and may not lead to justice-making in present society, except by example. Women certainly need to separate, as Alice Walker writes, at times for their own health.⁷⁰

Rather than effect a conclusive exodus from patriarchal society, another choice is to retain a sense of one's integ-

⁷⁰ Alice Walker, In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), xi-xii.

rity and fight discrimination with all one's being. "The virtue required of those who are powerless may be the courage to claim power," writes Hampson. She calls for a basic self-esteem that allows women to empower one another. There is a difference between what Mary Daly has prescribed for women and what is proposed here. Heyward characterizes Daly in the following way:

Daly has chosen to be a woman-defined woman among women for women. Noting . . . the extent to which women within patriarchy exhaust ourselves attempting to change patriarchal institutions, Daly has chosen to leave patriarchy in the only way possible . . . "living above" it all. Hence, she seems to lack interest in social change, including movements of class and race, which she perceives to be, at best, distractions from the women's revolution; at worst movements dominated by patriarchal interests, methods, and goals.⁷¹

Whereas Daly has called for an "exodus from being subordinate within male reality, to coming to stand on the edge of, and to some extent in contradiction to, the male reality," the exodus in Phase III may be more of an interior one which then manifests itself in certain specified outward exoduses in life (from the church is one example) without effecting a total separatist existence. In any case, the interior exodus, "once commenced, however, difficult, there is no way back."⁷²

⁷¹ Heyward, Our Passion for Justice, 61.

⁷² Daphne Hampson, "On Power and Gender," Modern Theology 4, no. 3 (1988): 241-42.

What enables women to keep in touch with their inner exodus from androcentric expectations and blind following of androcentric values is a community of women. Jessie Bernard has written about how this is one universal among women's experiences cross-culturally, that women tend to feed a vision and support women through times when masculinist establishment's disillusionment with a woman who goes against the grain.

The illnesses that come about here may be disillusionment from lack of hope, burnout from justice work and fighting the system with too little support and not enough relief: a risking of chaos, danger and madness that comes from having to "invent the rules" as one goes along.⁷³ The added sensitivity to the plight of the world, the structures of evil and the tenacity to which society holds to the status quo along with the awareness of global suffering can also lead to deep depression. Joanna Macy writes about this in her book, Despair and Personal Power in a Nuclear Age,⁷⁴ elaborating upon ways to combat hopelessness. Without friends and supportive like-minded people, confronting the structures and attitudes of the patriarchy in the workplace,

⁷³ As I shared an apartment on campus several nights a week this past semester with another faculty member, Kathy Black, who was teaching in the deaf ministries program, we would constantly be asking ourselves about our methods of teaching and grading papers, inquiring of each other, "Now how would a feminist pedagogy impinge upon this issue?"

⁷⁴ Joanna Macy, Despair and Personal Power in a Nuclear Age (Philadelphia: New Society, 1983).

in primary relationships and in religious institutions can be overpowering. Maureen Murdock writes,

[the return to the feminine] may be the most important part of the journey. When a woman decides not to play by patriarchal rules anymore she has no guidelines telling her to act, how to feel. When she no longer wants to perpetuate old archaic forms, life becomes exciting . . . and terrifying.⁷⁵

Carol Becker has described modern women as having achieved the maturity noted by Gilligan: they have an outer identity. But the problem remains that women are still anxious inside. What is required is increased self-empathy as the antidote to women's perennial punitive super-ego; women need to be kind, caring and generous to themselves as they tend to be with others. Next they need to protect themselves in love--to learn to bond with another person without losing their boundaries or their self-respect. Women need no longer diminish themselves in order to fit into love relationships or friendships which are "one size too small," writes Becker.⁷⁶ This may mean renouncing some illusions over romantic love and what it entails.⁷⁷ Hoagland has similar warnings concerning lesbian romantic relationships.⁷⁸

Whatever other directions women have in this phase,

⁷⁵ Murdock, 5.

⁷⁶ Becker, 172.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Hoagland, 164.

they often have a deep yearning to reconnect with their heritage or something valued from their childhood or their ancestry. For some, it may be to return to a denomination of their childhood with a renewed sense of the need to depatriarchalize it. Others may take up spinning, or sculpting or gardening. Others begin to collect stories from their oldest relatives. Many study cultures of the past, and images of old--female life symbols and the goddesses. Some independently wealthy journeyers may leave their work for a time to spend more time with young children, though often they combine this with some particular community work that is meaningful and in line with their sense of making a difference in the world. Some may become militant in causes, especially if they have experienced a great personal loss or crisis with regard to a particular issue, for example campaigning for gun control, lobbying for abortion rights, working with MADD, joining AIDS buddy programs and the like. Sin is seen most in terms of participation the dehumanizing structures and behaviors of dominant groups; white supremacy, racism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, able-bodiedism, speciesism, assaults on the earth. Sin as a rupture in right-relationship is a sin against God insofar as God is our power-in-relation.

Women's spirituality in Phase III can go in one of several directions. Some women choose to stay within their own traditions of their heritage, usually working to reform

the tradition at the local level, or if they access the larger hierarchical level, working there. If so they may still find it impossible to worship regularly in churches and congregations whose theology, liturgy and language are noninclusive. Some find other denominations to be more hospitable toward women.⁷⁹ Women-church groups have sprung up all over the nation, meeting usually in homes as feminist liberation base-communities. Some women find safe haven in women's support groups, and indeed the self-help groups movement has provided places for women to be share their vulnerabilities and work on personal issues not unrelated to their sense of spirituality.

Other women in Phase III move beyond the traditions of Judaism and Christianity to Goddess religions or radical feminist spirituality groups. In either case; staying within or moving beyond the traditions, a god image change occurs almost invariably. Women begin to entertain the notion of God as mother, or God as Goddess. Not satisfied with simply switching a male god's attributes over to female form, women question the omnipotent, holy-warrior Yahweh who is interested solely in ruling, either as king or queen. Debates abound in the literature concerning which attributes

⁷⁹ Two female professors recently switched from the Roman Catholicism of their upbringing, both stating that the "church finally left me." This was in response to the latest silencing of a Catholic University professor and the Vatican's reaction to Matthew Fox, in addition to a consideration of their local congregations' refusals to make changes.

for a deity best serve feminist persons, and which ones relate mainly to white people.⁶⁰ Overall, however, women in Phase III seek an image of God that helps effect positive transformation and affords sustenance and empowerment in our daily lives and encourages us to transform our society to the vision of the community of God.

Usually this means a switch from exclusively masculine images of God to ones which are androgynous (God/ess), alternately spoken of as He, then She, or in strictly non-anthropomorphic language. Soelle has suggested that such images as light, spirit, source of all good, water of life or life-giving wind have strong possibilities. McFague has

⁶⁰ See for example, Catherine Madsen, et al., "Roundtable Discussion: If God is God, She is not Nice," Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 5, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 103-17. Madsen finds it not helpful to have exchanged all the male attributes for typically female ones: "God as Mother; nurturer, healer, caretaker, peacemaker." She calls for an image of God which will allow for something to struggle against. Respondent Culpepper notes that she, too, doesn't want a monotheistic goddess who is "Great Mother" and into whom one sweeps all diverse realities into one cosmically large stereotype. Starhawk mentions that goddess has many faces, comfort and nurture are some of them, "and maybe women who have been struggling with the patriarchy deserve a few years of comfort and nurture." Finally, respondent Karen Baker-Fletcher mentions that in the Black church tradition, God is best seen as deliverer and healer of afflictions--that evil is largely the work of human self and human institutions such as slavery, segregation, and gender discrimination. She calls for a reimagining of God out of black women's knowledge of the power of vision, prayer, actual personal and social transformation and the experience of "making something out of nothing." Above all, writes Baker-Fletcher, for oppressed persons, God must emerge out of "our actual experience of what keeps us going in spite of the adversities of illness, social oppression, natural disaster, and the possibility of nuclear destruction at human hands."

avored God as friend, or God as the World.⁸¹

The virtues here, as noted above, have to do with creativity, wisdom and courage. J.B. Miller has called for a revaluation of formerly stereotypical women's activities of caring, vulnerability etc. Soelle calls the new virtues phantasy, tolerance and humor, anger, empathy, initiative and a cultivation of a productive power of the imagination.⁸² In all, what is valued is a greater sense of agency and integrity. Hoagland has mentioned valuing Lesbian energy in terms of "not just birthing and nurturing--but sparking, igniting, cajoling, sweating, developing, unearthing, interpreting, seeking, holding, imagining, refreshing, harassing, cleaning up, figuring out, making over, slowing down, piecing together and on and on."⁸³ Heyward has named the overarching virtue self-respect. Hampson has called the virtue empowerment, which means "coming to oneself."

Therapy with women in this Phase III has to do with continuing to encourage women clients to imagine, dream and to be in touch with their inner child and inner being as their own guide. Self-esteem must be continually nourished, as going against patriarchal grain will inevitably cause a

⁸¹ An extensive list of images/names for God categorized as nurturing names, earth images, liberating names, majestic names, personal images and general names can be found in Janet Schaffran and Pat Kozak, More Than Words: Prayer and Ritual for Inclusive Communities (Oak Park, Ill.: Meyer Stone, 1988).

⁸² Soelle, Beyond Mere Obedience.

⁸³ Hoagland, 301.

woman to be questioned by others. The quality of interpersonal relationships may be an issue for therapy as couples try to forge new patterns of relating to one another in nonpatriarchal ways. Guidance in parenting children in non-heterosexual, non-racist, non-sexist patterns may be important as well. (If the therapist does not know the principles, she should at least know the resources available, such as the journal Open Hands which includes articles for raising children without prejudice toward gay men and lesbians). As a woman fluctuates between the phases, she may need to be bolstered in a process-oriented fashion, rather than the more familiar goal-setting notion of patriarchy. Reminding a client that there is only a glimpse of liberation and acting out of such glimpses is not easy, is very helpful.

With regard to social transformation, Cooley writes that conversion in women's experience usually means not the traditional concept of conflict between one's identity as a unique, individual human being and one's relationships with others in terms of individual subjects and their resistance to these relationships, but rather, transformation marks a positive acknowledgement of a fundamental dependence beyond individual control and an affirmation of a relationship to a wider community of being."⁴ The vision of community is one not based on dependence on other such that positive worth is

⁴ Cooley, "Suffering and Power," 29.

derivative at best. It is not turning from heteronomy to autonomy nor from other-directedness to egocentricity. It is to interdependence. A full-related selfhood is a full participant in the wider community of being.⁸⁵

For Kim Chernin, the initiation had to do with coming to know herself in a community of women, and the courage to know God as a woman. The earthquake phenomenon was not unknown to Chernin. She asks if it is possible that a female god is actually unearthing herself from the female psyche, making claims on us, hastening back to redress the patriarchal imbalance in our culture? "If so, initiation must be the meeting place of self with history, the spiritual with the political, the intensely personal with the powerful relations of a troubled world."⁸⁶ After all, when a woman begins to seriously question what it means to be a woman, "she is pulling at a thread that can unravel an entire culture."⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁸⁶ Chernin, 28.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

CHAPTER 6

Formation and Transformation of God Images

God Images

What I am attempting to accomplish in this chapter is to lay out the interface of the way object relations with its understanding of formation of God images in the private life of the individual relates with the conceptual God of family and organized religion, and then to relate all of that to the social, political and behavioral patterns of society (i.e., patriarchy and possibility of the alternate vision of feminism: post-patriarchy).

Clifford Gertz has discussed how important the symbol system is for any given society.¹ It mediates meanings in life and makes sense of situations and transitions for persons and groups. The symbol system is made up of images that have moods and motivations. A mood is a deep feeling, such as awe and respect, or trust. A motivation is the social trajectory created by the mood that changes mythos into ethos and translates the images to reality in the social and political sphere of human interactions. Gertz says that religious systems must be replaced, as the mind

¹ Clifford Gertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic, 1973), 87-125.

abhors a vacuum and needs symbols to make meaning; otherwise, systems will revert to familiar form. In other words, some symbolic system operates in every culture that not only fashions our view of the transcendent (or divine reality) but also influences our structuring of society. "As in heaven, so on earth."

Carol Christ takes up some of these issues in her latest book, Laughter of Aphrodite.² She applies Gertz's mood and motivation in symbols to first the Father God of Christianity and Judaism, showing how this male god yields, among other things, moods of fear, awe and respect, and results in valuing of male power and devaluing of female power in political reality. She suggests a better construct would be to use goddess, and gives four examples of how goddess images seen in terms of benevolent power, female body as valued throughout all its cycles, representation of female will (a will not over/against others' will), and an example of woman's bonding and heritage--all of these can be psychologically healing for a woman through the moods and can be socially reconstructing, at least in part, through the motivation. Most feminist theologians I have read recently, if they don't call directly for a female deity image, certainly disdain having exclusively masculinist images. There are a variety of reasons for their holding of this position, but all agree that it is unhealthy for women

² Christ, Laughter, 117-32.

to relate only to an authoritarian father god. In fact, Soelle says to identify with him is the worst thing a woman can do.

Male power, for me, is something to do with roaring, shooting and giving orders. I do not think this patriarchal culture has done me any more damage than it has done other women. It only became constantly more obvious to me that any identification with the aggressor, the ruler, the violator, is the worst thing that can happen to a woman.³

Goddesses are held in various states of repute; but as Jean Lambert points out in The 'F' Factor, what characterizes female white theologians' work is a "stubborn generosity toward divergent opinions."⁴

Feminists working in the area of reimagining God and tradition can be seen as falling into two categories, says Carol Christ: one with respect to tradition and the other with respect to symbols of the deity.⁵ With regard to traditions there are three main categories:

1. The tradition (Judeo/Christian tradition) is basically nonsexist if appropriately interpreted;
2. The tradition is both sexist and nonsexist: feminist vision is upheld and the nonsexist is valued, while the sexist is criticized;
3. The tradition is patriarchal to the core and not

³ Soelle, Beyond Mere Obedience, xix.

⁴ Lambert, 112.

⁵ Christ, Laughter, 144-7.

redeemable. Therefore we must look beyond the tradition (post-Christian, post-Jewish, Wicca, etc.)

The other main column is with respect to the symbolism needed. There are four categories:

1. Keep the language masculine but interpret it in nonoppressive ways (especially as it relates to the role and person of Jesus).

2. Use nonanthropomorphic language for the deity (light, spirit, love, etc.).

3. Include the female language along with the male; make God bisexual or have two gods.

4. Utilize iconoclasm; female deity language must have ascendancy, at least for a time, in order to balance out the past.

Now, this is no small matter when applied to object relations. I myself have struggled with what to do with images of deity for my children. So far it turns out we have a god, we have Jesus and we have many goddesses in our household. The children seem to be taken with the goddess associated with nature and healing. God comes in all the time on television and at church. Angels and goddesses get mixed up. I am not sure what will happen to their images. It's also a problem for feminists. Women as evolving feminists become more and more troubled with exclusively masculinist images of deity, yet conjuring up a female image is culturally unprecedented for many. It just doesn't feel

right. So are we left with light and love? Yes, for some; but that lacks the personal element. Object relations tells us that God is a personal object and one does have a relation to it.

Compound this with the problem that not only does our language about the deity have to change for the well-being of "women and the earth" and "men and technocratic society" (say Soelle, Ruether, Heyward, McFague, Christ, etc.), but the attributes of deity images are called into question. It will do no good, says Carol Christ, to substitute "she" for a warrior god, an imperialistic king, a triumphant messiahship or a perfectionistic model.⁶ All these are based on alienated masculinist spirituality notions, and they tend to alienate us from each other and from the earth.

McFague takes all of this seriously by consciously manipulating the deity images. McFague began in Metaphorical Theology by discussing what she chose as the root metaphor of the Kingdom of God.⁷ She said a metaphor has an "is and is not," and metaphors must not be frozen or literalized. God as father is and is not father. She discusses the pros and cons of various other metaphors for God and concludes that God as Friend is a good supplement to parental images. In her latest book she revises her

⁶ Ibid., 73-82.

⁷ Sallie McFague, Metaphorical Theology: Models of God In Religious Language (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982). Also see her Models of God.

thoughts on the imperial deity, decides to include the relation of all creation into the model for God and uses God as the World. She chooses models that are destabilizing, non-hierarchical, inclusive of all creation and calls for multiple models of God with whom to relate. Her main point is that theology is mostly fiction: key metaphors and models of relationships. But some fictions are better than others (heuristic element).

The criticism of McFague is that just adding female images or other relational images will not do the trick. Some authors fear female hegemony will result from the overthrow of the male gods. And certainly there are plenty of cultures which have goddesses and also have male hegemony. Yet, says Carol Christ, if Gertz is right, female images of God will contribute to the social and political attitude change necessary for social change. And Gerda Lerner has proposed that the two founding metaphors of patriarchy in the Western world are the devaluing of the feminine in terms of deity and the Aristotelian notion of women as imperfect or defective.⁸

Rizzuto posits that the unconscious is the repository for rudimentary God images that are formed from parental images beginning during the oral phase of life.⁹ Relations

⁸ Gerda Lerner, The Creation of Patriarchy, 10.

⁹ Ana-Maria Rizzuto, The Birth of the Living God (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

with parents pour form and content into the God image of the private world of the child. All children of Western culture have a God image, she contends, because children usually are given God at the end point of endless questions on causality. Also, God functions like any other transitional object: it is found in the environment and it is created in the inner mind of the child, just as is the personality of the teddy bear (the bear is found and yet created). But the God image is the only image that cannot be reality-tested; all other relationships can be. Also, Rizzuto says, God images don't go away. They must be transformed and grow all during life, especially in life crisis, or they present problems and are repressed, only to pop back up at another time in earlier, more immature form. Rizzuto contends that God images change during adult development with the succession of new and better relationships with others. She also talks about the private God, which the child "takes as a pet under her arm when she first meets the institutional god," coming into conflict with the God concepts of the family and institution. If they find concordance together, then the result is ego-syntonic and the religion is experienced as appropriate, healthy, helping and comforting the individual. If private image and public image collide, there is discordance, frustration, confusion and disillusionment.

It is this later issue that is crucial for the present thesis. It has to do with the institutional God as pre-

sented by patriarchal institutions and the innermost God representations that are common to children across religions, ages, socialization, family influence and personality traits. David Heller interviewed (and used play and projective techniques with) 40 children ages 4-12 of Jewish, Roman Catholic, Protestant and Hindu religious traditions and then discussed the differences of their inner God representation according to age-related themes, gender themes, socialization by religious institution, family home environment, parenting and personality themes.¹⁰ Most interesting are his findings about the God images based on gender, and the findings of universal elements across all other lines.

Heller's research showed that boys had an almost universal antipathy for entertaining the notion that God might be a female, though their actual God images had many stereotypically maternal features to them. They were adamant that the concept had to be male. In addition, comparing the boys of all ages 4-12 with the girls of all ages, the boys' deity image was characterized by rationality (rational, pragmatic thinking, omniscient, in space and time and math), more emotionally distant than the girls' (though the boys wished the deity were closer--their personality themes characterized God as "distant thing in the sky" or "once and future

¹⁰ David Heller, The Children's God (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

king"), as active in events, and they identified and counteridentified with the deity.

Girls, on the other hand, across the board, were very open to the notion of a female God, though as they got older they were more reluctant to admit they thought it so. ("I wouldn't say it out loud," said a 12-year-old: "Everybody would think I was stupid." In contrast to a 6-year-old: "Of course, God could be Female--God could be both. I don't see any reason why not. . . ."); their deity image was aesthetic (associated with music, art, nature and feelings), passive (people were active, God less aggressive, less obvious), intimate (even as partner, "God as lover in the sky") and God within, and had a surface masculinity with a latent androgyny. If they painted a picture of a male God, they showed him with a guitar and surrounded by flowers, for example. Although Heller did not make the connection, the little girls' deity figures are strikingly similar to the feminist vision of deity; both as depicted in unconscious representations of adult women¹¹ and as consciously constructed by feminist theologians.

Heller's research showed that the children across the board, regardless of their institutional religious training, family dynamics and age differentials, seemed to have a

¹¹ See for example, Mary Lou Randour, "The Concept of God in the Psychological Formation of Females," Psychoanalytic Psychology 4, no. 4 (1987): 301-13.

collectively held image of the deity which had the following commonalities:

1. God is in human interconnection. God is that which brings people together.

2. God is present in transformation and growth: that which changes and empowers us to change ourselves and our relationships.

3. God has qualified power. God is needy, needs people and children to do the (deity's) work--say, loving, caring, responsibility for others, etc.

4. God is expansive and everywhere--there is nowhere that God isn't.

5. God is intimate and close to the child--inside her heart, around her to talk with, beside him to cause him to act a certain way.

6. God is associated with mystery and anxiety. It was hard for the children to make strong declarative statements about who God is (deity content rather than process) because although they had been told, they weren't sure they agreed or believed.

7. God is associated with light (the only non-personal nonanthropomorphic metaphor). One boy said,

I don't know what to call it exactly, but it's sort of like there's a little light inside you . . . Even when something goes wrong, like when my sister died, it still can shine.¹²

¹² Heller, 128.

Heller also mentions that the private God of the child comes into contact with the conceptual God of the institutional faith and the course is very problematic. First the child enjoys the ritual and mystery. Then the child feels that the God of concepts is too parental, too judgmental, too concerned with good and bad; later the child feels more disillusionment: cannot express his or her own private God. It is in direct opposition sometimes to what children are learning about God from their families and institutions, progressing to the disillusionment that ritual is empty and their private God is more and more drowned out by the conceptual God, resulting in their having great difficulty expressing their own spontaneous point of view.

In conclusion: what if the children's God is like the feminist God? What if all children have a repository for that kind of God of interconnection, mutuality, caring, benevolence, less hierarchical power, symbol of light? What if not only women's vision is snuffed out by patriarchy but the rudimentary images of God/esses within every child? And what would happen if the child found congruence with its spontaneous God in the environment? This would tie up "the unconscious" right back with the vision. What about the God commonly held by children and by many women? There is a direct correspondence between feminist theologians' conceptualization of God and articulated theology with the deity described by the children. Tillich says unconscious

symbols can't be mediated; their referent is transcendent. Following this suggestion, perhaps the children's God is the transcendent God, the God they envision is a reflection of the supernatural. Or perhaps it's the commonly held wished-for and longed-for parent they don't have. In any case, feminists are about the business of creating new symbols to afford congruence among (1) feminist vision, (2) social systems and (3) the nature of reality. It is particularly exciting to explore the interface of the unconscious deity images with the symbol systems: the meeting of the private God object of the child with the conceptual God conception of the theologians. As we learned from the feminist theologians analyzing scripture, the function is important. The pragmatic norm and central theme is what promotes the full humanity of women, men and children and exhibits care for the earth. Drawing on the work of Nietzsche, McFague concludes that "we construct the worlds we inhabit . . . [then] we forget that we have done so."¹³ Erich Heller said, "Be careful how you interpret the world . . . it is like that."¹⁴ After all, some fictions are better than others--for all concerned.

Changing Inner Objects: Object Relations Therapy

For individuals who are single, who live alone or who prefer not to invite into therapy their primary or extended

¹³ McFague, Models of God, 6.

¹⁴ Ibid.

family members, object relations therapy may be the best choice. While some feminists have been reluctant to endorse family therapy, in particular because they are not comfortable with its utilization of the term "object" for person in the environment, as well as its rootage in psychoanalysis, many other feminists are using object relations theory and technique in their theoretical understandings and counseling.¹⁵ Object relations therapy has become a significant development because it takes an interpersonal approach to client's problems and it places the therapeutic relationship at the center of the healing process. Feminists appreciate the human being being viewed primarily as a relational entity from the start; rather than being driven by instinctual drives for satisfactions, object relations theories shift the emphasis from innate, biological instincts to interactions with the external environment. Optimum development for people comes about not so much from gratifications of instinctual needs but rather from satisfying early human relationships. While there are several object relations theories (among which some experts also classify Heinz Kohut and his self psychology), certain important features of object relations theories coalesce around four particular areas: (1) the role of instinct and the nature of objects, (2) the nature and formation of psychic structures,

¹⁵ Notable ones include Chodorow, Eichenbaum and Orbach, Maggie Scarf, and the later works of Alice Miller.

(3) development as viewed in terms of objects and (4) the nature of conflict and therapy.¹⁶

Early object relations theorists often understood the ego as being whole at birth, with its own energy. Bad experiences with objects and subsequent processes of splitting cause the loss of original ego unity. Ego development takes place by means of internalization, a form of taking in interactions with significant objects. Conflict is seen in terms of troublesome, split-off, primitive, internal objects.¹⁷

The purpose of therapy is to foster the resurfacing of these primitive objects, helping to reintegrate them within the ego in more healthy ways. Primitive objects are often recognized as intense feelings that impede the person's relationships and shape how they feel about themselves, especially in terms of their core sense of self-worth.

Object relations theories have proved most helpful in terms of elucidating how it is the god image is formed and transformed through one's relationship with other important persons in one's life and in understanding very early phases of infants existence, particularly deficits of the self prior to the school-age. It emphasizes the immense importance of what is now known commonly as "good enough mother-

¹⁶ A variety of ways of classifying the elements and differences among object relations theories can be utilized. Here I have noted the ones set out by Michael St. Clair, Object Relations and Self Psychology (Monterey, Calif.: Brooks Cole, 1986), this discussion occurring particularly on pages 1-22 and 168-72. A much more comprehensive analysis of a variety of object relations theories can be found in Jay Greenberg and Stephen Mitchell, Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

¹⁷ St. Clair, 169.

ing" at critical early years in children's lives when they begin to learn what it is to have a sense of self both dependent on and independent of other people. In addition, object relations theories are most useful in bringing to light issues of what are labeled in psychiatry as borderline, narcissistic and schizoid disorders of the personality.

As John McDargh noted in his research, often the conceptualization of God, including the intellectual evidence given to us by society, has served to diminish the significance of personal God representations.¹⁸ It is my theory that when one's conception of God as offered by a particular societal group--either in the form of religious upbringing, family God, church or congregation--is at odds with one's inner God representation, there are three ways in which one can respond. The first is to pay lip service to the God of family, church, upbringing or current circle of influential peers while secretly continuing to harbor great doubts about the reality of such a God. This is overwhelmingly the most frequent "solution" to the disharmony individuals have felt between their personal God images and societal conceptions.¹⁹

¹⁸ John McDargh, Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion: On Faith and the Imaging of God (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1983).

¹⁹ In a class I teach called "Formations and Transformation of God Images," each student is required to do a case study on a subject's inner God image as portrayed through their drawings, projective techniques (TAT cards), family and god questionnaires and further conversation. It is often striking the disparity between the God the subjects "know they are supposed to believe

A second solution is to abandon the God of their particular religious tradition due to insufficient evidence of the likelihood of asserted attributes of such a God. For example, a continuing debate in Jewish circles is whether, given the Holocaust, the fundamental claim that Yahweh is a God who works in history can continue to be asserted.²⁰ Similarly, questions are raised whether the core of Christianity can be seen as anti-Jewish and whether a non-abusive understanding of issues of suffering can be established--these are being debated. Such discussions lead to new intellectual formulations calling into question some of the traditional root metaphors for God and Christ.²¹ If one abandons the traditional assumptions of one's religious belief and conscious image of God, then one is left with one of four options. Atheism is a possibility. Transferring to a different denomination, congregation or local church that is more of "like-mind" is another option.²² Finally, staying

in" and the way "God really seems to be."

²⁰ For a very enlivening discussion of Judaism's understanding of the theological implications of historical events with a variety of post-Auschwitz reactions (including declaring the covenant null and void) clarifying the Holocaust's covenantal challenge, see Alan L. Berger, "Holocaust and History: A Theological Reflection," Journal of Ecumenical Studies 25, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 194-211.

²¹ See, for example, James F. Moore, "A Spectrum of Views: Traditional Christian Responses to the Holocaust," Journal of Ecumenical Studies 25, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 212-24.

²² For example, gay men and lesbians and those who sympathize with their situation may switch to one of the "reconciling churches" within United Methodism or join the reconciling move-

within the denomination and fighting for change from within is another option--one that has been discussed earlier for those who are reformers. Finally, leaving one's current religious body and aligning oneself with another world religion or a post-Christian, post-Jewish group is another possibility.²³

It is my thesis that object relations therapy can be a useful therapy to use in terms of bringing up issues of a personal God image and working on these. A pastoral counselor well-versed in object relations therapy could utilize the therapeutic relation not only to bring up and name the primitive object relations with closest family members and key figures in one's past and present, but also to utilize the transference and countertransference to begin to understand the etiology and transformation of the client's present God image. Pastoral counselors who have skills and education in working with a variety of religious symbols and understanding the theological backgrounds of persons who have been brought up in the black church, in the Japanese Christian community, in white Southern evangelicalism--

ment that opposes the official stance of the church.

²³ Several women scholars of religion have chosen this later option. See, for example: Carol Christ's journey as she writes about it in Laughter; Christine Downing's movement into the goddess religions in "In Search of Her" in The Goddess (New York: Crossroad, 1984); Brock's involvement with Wicca; Rita Gross and Joanna Macy becoming Buddhist; and Rosemary Ruether and Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza's involvement in Woman-Church in their various books.

members of these varying communities would have developed expertise in understanding where a client's personal God image is in consonance and in dissonance with the faith of their upbringing. They also could utilize the transference and countertransference to begin to effect a more positive image of God, especially through the techniques of unconditional positive regard, mirroring and reparenting. Lastly, as a member of a faith community and endorsed by that group to do ministry on its behalf, either as lay or ordained, pastoral counselors obviate some of the need to prove that they take faith or spirituality seriously in terms of doing therapy with those who are devout.

In object relations therapy, as the therapeutic relationship changes, grows and helps to replace the deficits of parenting with "good enough parenting", mirroring, and dialogue, the primitive objects surface and are reintegrated. In the same way that subsequent relationships affect adult God images in a person's current life, the therapeutic relationship could assist in several ways. First, it could help a client to develop a God image, one which is more consonant with adult faith, with intellectualization, with advancing cognitive ability, with growing prophetic vision and with more comprehension of "whom it is they may find for repose." It could help one discern what gives them hope to continue in the face of personal and global adversity, oppression and structures of evil.

Finally, the therapeutic relationship could aid in the discovery of what empowers persons to continue to struggle for the betterment of their lives, the lives of their family, lovers, children and continue to care for the fate of the earth itself.

Whereas object relations therapy holds the possibility for individual therapy in intense work on repressed objects, object relations family therapy is now coming to the fore with similar techniques of individual therapy utilized in groups. Pioneers in this process are David and Jill Scharff who have written two books on the subject, and Samuel Slipp.²⁴ Object relations family therapy clarifies the multiplicity of issues going on in the dynamics of family interactions in connection with the individual internal object representations of the family members. It refocuses on the individual members of the family within the family grouping rather than emphasizing the group functioning as a whole. It tends to encourage long-term family therapy processes, with careful unfolding interplay of sensitive clinical observations, gentle interventions and change occurring as a result of the enduring relationship of therapist(s) and family, utilizing transference, countertrans-

²⁴See Jill Savege Scharff, ed., Foundations of Object Relations Family Therapy (Northvale, N.J.: Aronson, 1989); Jill Savege Scharff and David Scharff, Object Relations Family Therapy (Northvale, N.J.: Aronson, 1987); and Samuel Slipp, Object Relations: A Dynamic Bridge Between Individual and Family Treatment (Northvale, N.J.: Aronson, 1984).

ference and understanding of unconscious forces as well as group relations. It also emphasizes the family's developmental history and life cycle and helps aid the family to become a safe holding place for adaptation and growth for each of its members.²⁵

In sum, object relations individual therapy can be particularly helpful as an overarching theory and technique for working with women and their God images, and object relations family therapy is another possibility. Another a very important theory and school of therapy which is particularly optimal for women besides individual feminist therapy is feminist family therapy.

Changing Inner and Outer Representations:

Feminist Family Therapy

A Case Study

Early one summer evening during a pastoral counseling residency, I got a call from a woman named Karen. She had phoned our pastoral counseling center in hopes of finding a female therapist with whom she could discuss some problems in her marriage. She spoke quietly, seemed rather frightened and insecure and requested for the first session that

²⁵ I had the opportunity to hear a lecture and do a workshop with Jill Scharff at the Mid-Atlantic AAPC fall conference (1989). I was impressed with the gentle respectful way in which she does family therapy and her approach seems to incorporate many of the principles of feminist family therapy outlined in the next section. However, having had no training so far in object relations family therapy I do not feel competent to utilize it at the present time.

we just meet alone, since her husband intimidated her, was highly skilled in professional mediation and managed to negate whatever she said. I agreed to see her alone for the first session.

Karen was a 41-year-old white woman, an elementary school teacher with a B.A. degree and 60 additional units; the second of five children ranging in age from 43 to 28. Her father was a retired chemist, alcoholic; mother, a "retired" housewife. This was Karen's second marriage; her first husband, an alcoholic, committed suicide by jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge 14 years ago. She had subsequently lived alone for eight years quite happily except that she had experienced an "overwhelming desire" to have children. Six years ago she met Leo. They were married after a brief courtship, and they now had two children: Leo Jr., five years old, and Cheryl, five months old.

In the first session she spoke of the difficulties of her marriage. She described Leo as very domineering, controlling and refusing to let her see her parents or her women friends. She had given up a successful business career when she married Leo, having turned over to him a substantial profit from her business. Soon she was pregnant with Leo Jr., and she started a day care center in her home. She had become severely depressed at the time, barely able to get through the day's chores of taking care of six children. She reported that her husband had thought of her as

"doing nothing" all day. She pulled herself out of the depression enough to get a job as a school teacher, but now she had all the responsibilities of a profession, a mother and housekeeper. This summer she was particularly exhausted because her husband expected her to do major work fixing up the house along with parenting, getting up to nurse the baby at night and preparing for another school year. She had become depressed again, and this scared her.

Karen said her husband tormented her daily, emotionally abusing her, ridiculing her and restraining her from having any life outside of work and family. At one point she went to the House of Ruth, where she realized that although her husband had not become physically assaultive toward her, she was definitely an emotionally battered wife. To her despair, her husband found out about her group therapy and would not allow her to continue.

Karen had begun sleeping in the guest room when she was in her last trimester of pregnancy with Cheryl because she was so uncomfortable, and she continued to sleep there so as not to wake up her husband when the baby cried for night feedings. Actually, she confided, it was also because she detested him and hence was no longer sexually attracted to him. She was only happy when he was away on business trips. When asked why she did not leave him, she said it was because he held a lot of power in the community, was a smooth talker, a good father, and would surely receive

custody (at least shared if not full) of the children if she were to divorce him. She came to counseling hoping that marital counseling might help him change. If, as she suspected, change were not possible for him, then she would simply need to learn to abide the abuse until the children were old enough to leave home. She could not bear the thought of being parted from her children. (I consulted my supervisor, who holds her doctorate in social work, as to the reality of Karen's fears of losing her children to Leo, should Karen divorce him. Sadly, she affirmed that this would probably be the case.)

My second session was with Leo alone. He seemed self-confident, polite, suave and competent. At 42 years of age, he was currently working on his M.B.A. at night while working as vice president of a large construction company. An only child, he was particularly close to his mother with whom he talked on the phone twice a week. He had also been married once before, for three months, which was "a disaster." He wanted this marriage to work and implied that it would if only Karen would change. All of his comments were phrased with reference to what is "reasonable," "right" and "makes sense." He said that the "marriage is just not working out right; Karen has too much of a sense of personal rights rather than responsibilities with regard to others." He wanted her to be a better wife; clean the house more regularly and more thoroughly, to go to bed early with him,

have sex with him; in short, to be a "real wife." He would like to be a good husband, but he couldn't, he said, unless it's "up against a good wife." He agreed that he yelled at her a lot, that she would withdraw and that both would feel hostile for a long time. He said he didn't want a divorce, but that they weren't very happy together.

For the next three weeks we did couples counseling, setting a goal of better communication and more "give and take." Contracts were made concerning how many nights Karen would sleep with Leo, and how many he would allow her to sleep in the guest room without complaining. Efforts were made to help Leo hear Karen's feeling statements without becoming paternalistic, and strategic techniques were used to get him more involved with the care for the daughter. The phrasing of one such maneuver included my saying to Karen,

Now I don't know if you trust your husband enough to allow him to get up on Saturday mornings and feed Cheryl and take care of the kids while you sleep in; you seem to need to control all the caretaking of the children.

(He looked upset at the latter strategy, as he usually slept in both weekend mornings and claimed he didn't know the first thing about taking care of infants, and he didn't want to start; she looked ashamed at being judged as over involved with her kids.) I made special effort to support Leo, since he was "outnumbered" by the women, since I knew he had to be "hooked" to stay in therapy and since Karen was

calling me during the week to evaluate her feelings and reactions to his latest tirades against her. Aside from the fact that I knew little about family systems at the time and had had little experience in marital counseling, I was increasingly uncomfortable with the dynamics of the relationship and my role of facilitating the stated goals which I saw as merely stop-gap measures. And in spite of the fact that they said they were fighting less, on the fifth visit (not inconsequentially, after I had asked Leo to refrain from pronouncing judgment on Karen's feelings at least until she was able to complete the sentences), Leo decided to terminate therapy. Karen tearfully agreed because she was "just so busy doing everything for school and home and children and husband that she didn't have the hour a week to spare for therapy." I tried to encourage them to continue, and they politely said they would call if they needed me in the future, but things were much better now, thank you very much. I pleaded with Karen to do some individual work if at all possible, because she needed some support and I was concerned about her feelings of depression. She agreed. Leo said she was really "a tough ol' girl" who "just needed to get straightened out a bit," and he escorted her to the door. He left smiling. She followed him out in silence.

I sat down in a heap, resting near the floor fan to let the cool air flow in my face. I noted that I felt both furious and exasperated. A million questions ran through my

head all at once, while accusations joined in to add to my confusion. Why wasn't I able to remain objective in this situation? "Remain?" The truth was that I hadn't liked Leo from the first session; I'd heard similar descriptions of men all too often. Then when I met him, he was too smooth, too self-assured, too jeering at her, too superior. The only way I could muster compassion for him was to think about how he himself was a victim of his mother's smothering enmeshment which continued to this day. So, there it was: always blame the women. And I was very put off by his rationality; it was just like dealing with a lawyer, not a husband. Was that just because I preferred Karen's affective communication style?

I knew that the weak person in a relationship traditionally espouses values such as justice, compassion and relatedness, while the powerful person advocates control, rationality, law and discipline. Here it was again: the husband so rational, the wife concerned with caring. Then I realized how I had always appealed to the cognitive in him, utilizing my cognitive skills. Probably that's why he had liked me. Why did I rush to restore the power in the family to the father, thereby reducing Karen's self-esteem and limited authority? Perhaps they should have had a male therapist. Why is it more uncomfortable for me to confront a man in therapy? Why do we so often put pressure on the woman in the family to change? Because we know that she

probably would be willing to do anything to save her children from harm? Even if it harms herself? How does the fact that I, as a woman, struggle with issues of power in my own life, in my own profession, affect my work with people?

Other questions assailed me. Even though this happened several years ago, I was acquainted at that time with the findings of research that showed how women in traditional relationships which exhibit strong adherence to stereotypic gender roles pay high costs. I knew such married women suffer higher rates of depression, poorer physical health, lower self-esteem, less personal autonomy, and poorer marital adjustment, communication and satisfaction than women in more egalitarian relationships; that they also feel less competent, less attractive, lonelier, more bored and dissatisfied with their lives and are more often the victims of wife abuse.²⁶ And here it was, this case which certainly bore out those research findings. What about Karen's role in her own oppression? Was she utilizing her weakness and depression to empower herself? And what right would I have to try to infringe my feminist viewpoints on the couple who have no intention of moving toward second order change, just to shift things around so they are more satisfactory? What was my role as a feminist pastoral counselor with regard to

²⁶ Judith Myers Avis, "The Politics of Functional Family Therapy: A Feminist Critique," Journal of Marital and Family Therapy 11, no. 2 (1985): 131.

the particularities of my clients who come to me for family therapy?

At the time I was beginning to study family therapy in course work, literature and supervision. Through the introduction of family systems I began to see the relationship issues of object relations as currently operating in the family, and the need for intervening in the system became foremost. Thereby, I decided that I would prefer to intervene therapeutically at the systems level first and work individually with those persons who were single or who preferred to work individually.

It was a time when feminist therapy was just being discussed, primarily in literature in journals and at conferences. Feminist individual therapy characterizes itself as distinctly nonauthoritarian and usually denies the philosophical position of therapist as expert. The personal is political and the client is urged to differentiate between what are HER problems and what are society's problems, what is socially appropriate and what may be appropriate for her. Women learn how to be self-nurturing, hopefully to become freed from constant need of nurturing by others, and are urged to take normal self-interest as equally important to interest in others. Emphasis is not placed on the woman becoming feminist herself, but rather the therapist promotes equality of power and equality of

responsibility within a context of patriarchy in family and society.²⁷

Given the number of studies that have documented the destructive consequences of traditional family structure and roles for all family members, but most overwhelmingly and extensively for women,²⁸ it would stand to reason that family therapists would be interested in changing family functions and freeing up traditional gender roles. In fact, the accumulated evidence of the men's and women's liberation movements and their effect on male and female roles documents that changes are already occurring throughout North America. In the work place and in the family the struggle involves pervasive alterations in belief systems, roles, values and behaviors. As Avis states,

The relationship between family and society parallels that between individual and family. Each family is affected by and affects the broader society and it is this reciprocal and circular interaction between family and environment which creates a context which gives meaning to familial patterns of behavior . . . since the family may be seen as "the key to change, whether it be by revolution" and since family therapy is the profession which claims to have the most knowledge and expertise in effecting family change it is the responsibility of the family therapist to actively promote change in family functions.²⁹

²⁷ "Report of the Task Force on Sex Bias and Sex Role Stereotyping in Psychotherapeutic Process," American Psychologist (Dec. 1975): 1170-71.

²⁸ Avis, "Politics," 130-1, and Virginia Goldner, "Feminism and Family Therapy," Family Process 24 (1985): 31-47.

²⁹ Judith Myers Avis, "Through a Different Lens: A Reply to Alexander, Warburton, Waldron and Maas," Journal of Marital and Family Therapy 11, no. 2 (1985): 132.

Thus the question facing feminists who are also family therapists is the question proposed by such women as Betty Carter, Olga Silverstein, Peggy Papp and Marianne Walters, organizers of The Women's Project in Family Therapy, put forth in 1984:

How can you be a family therapist without becoming a guardian of the patriarchal, conservative values that the traditional family represents? In other words . . . how can you be both a feminist and a family therapist?³⁰

When I add for myself the identity of Christian feminist with its attendant role of the prophet, my theology and ensuing ethic gives a sense of calling or mandate to the issue. I agree with Jacobson that no therapist is value-free or neutral and that "All forms of psychotherapy are political by virtue of the fact that they have consequences for the expression and distribution of power."³¹ As a feminist family therapist, I view "the family as a system which can serve to maintain or to challenge the inequities of patriarchy."³² As a feminist pastoral counselor, I agree with the predominant feminist theological stance that Nelle Morton articulates so clearly:

When we look for our cardinal sin--the roots of oppression--we are confronted with patriarchy as a system of organizing society. The scope of patriarchy is tremendous, for it is a way of structuring reality in terms of good/evil,

³⁰ Betty Carter quoted in Richard Simon, "From Ideology to Practice," Family Therapy Networker 8, no. 3 (May-June 1984): 28.

³¹ Avis, "Politics," 128.

³² Marianne Walters in Simon, 30.

structuring reality in terms of good/evil, redemption/guilt, authority/obedience, reward/punishment, power/powerless, have/have not, master/slave. With gender-stereotyped images patriarchy created a master/servant mentality which in time spawned racisms, sexism, nationalisms, colonialisms, classes and castes."³³

Thus, as part and parcel of my identity as a feminist pastoral counselor, I feel the call to participate in the liberation of all persons, including a "restructuring of society to maximize the incentives for mutuality rather than oppressiveness."³⁴ Therefore pastoral counselors who work either cross-culturally or within their own ethnic, racial and national boundaries groups, part of the prophetic call is to explore what it means to look at the theory and practice of any of the schools of contemporary psychotherapy in light of what it means for the well-being of women, children and men involved.

Feminism Critiques Traditional Family Therapy

Feminism begins with a recognition of the inferior status of women and proceeds to an analysis of the specific forms and causes of this inequality. In regard to family therapy, feminism demands that we take a more critical look at both the institution of the family and our therapeutic approaches. Family therapy has been a male-dominated field only recently impacted by feminist thought. Several reasons have been postulated for the fact that

³³ Morton, 74-6.

³⁴ Ruether, Disputed Questions, 139.

social and socially conscious therapy, has only recently begun to confront the extent to which 'the family' is itself a construct weighed down with ideological baggage.³⁵

Several reasons have been postulated. One is because this generation of feminists has been writing as daughter and not as mother. As feminists are now becoming mothers, an upsurge of interest in the organization of the domestic sphere is occurring, and therefore an interest and critique of family therapy is being added. Another reason is that the feminists recently interested in critiquing family therapy have sometimes been afraid of censure. As Dorothy Wheeler writes, "To voice a feminist criticism is often to risk being dismissed as biased, criticized for unleashing 'hostile' or 'anti-male' attitudes, or to have your maturity or sexual preference questioned."³⁶ Indeed, Betty Carter commented that "When the four of us [The Women's Project] got together, I remember feeling that we were doing something a little naughty. We all felt some trepidation doing it." Peggy Papp adds, "We were concerned that we would alienate our male colleagues in the field. We were very cautious."³⁷ Some progress has been made in the last few years, however, and various critiques of family theory and

³⁵ Virginia Goldner, "Feminism and Family Therapy," Family Process 24 (1985): 32.

³⁶ Dorothy Wheeler, "Fear of Feminism in Family Therapy," Family Therapy Networker 9, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1985): 54.

³⁷ Ibid.

practice based on feminist theory have appeared.³⁸

A variety of general themes of family therapy have been critiqued. First, most family therapists have taken an asexual, diagrammatic view of the family. As Olga Silverstein states,

There is no such thing as a symmetrical family in this society. Women's unhappiness in their one-down position is a cause for great distress in families--and not just for women."³⁹

Another criticism is that family therapists have neglected to take into account historical, social and economic contexts. Feminists like Molly Layton are insisting, for example, that when we see an "over-involved" woman, we are looking less at a particular family's unique problem than a situation permeating the culture at large. "Of course women are going to look over-involved in the lives of their children, what do you expect?"⁴⁰ Other issues, such as female enmeshment and male disengagement, or Bowenian scale of differentiation are criticized as not taking into account the emergence of such a sociology of gender roles documented by Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Dinnerstein.⁴¹

³⁸ See lists of publications in Avis, "Politics," 127, and Morris Taggart, "The Feminist Critique in Epistemological Perspective: Questions of Context in Family Therapy," Journal of Marital and Family Therapy 11, no. 2 (1985): 113-14.

³⁹ Simon, 32.

⁴⁰ Molly Layton, "Tipping the Therapeutic Scales-- Masculine, Feminine or Neuter?" Family Therapy Networker 8, no. 3 (May-June 1984): 22.

⁴¹ Ibid., 23.

Feminist theory calls into question any systems theory that particularizes the family as an entity unto itself, without regard to the wider context, specifically the context of patriarchy. It criticizes circular-causality that victimizes women by suggesting that in issues such as rape, incest and wife-battering the partners are "mutually interacting." ⁴²

The nature of feminist critique raises questions about epistemology, calling for a systemic epistemology not a foundational one.⁴³ Feminists are quick to point out that all the significant elements of the social, natural and spiritual world are linguistically differentiated by gender, and the mythologies of most cultures rely heavily on gender symbols. Feminists question the notion of objectivity in every field. For example, studying the origins of modern science, Evelyn Keller argues that our image of science as an abstract body of theory which is

emotionally and sexually neutral, is itself a cultural myth; science from Frances Bacon to the present has been consistently depicted as a masculine force mastering a female nature.⁴⁴

This leads to a consideration of radical constructivism:

a theory of knowledge in which knowledge does not reflect an 'objective' ontological reality, but

⁴² Taggert, 114-7.

⁴³ Ibid., 121.

⁴⁴ Virginia Goldner, "Warning: Family Therapy May Be Hazardous to Your Health," Family Therapy Networker 9, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1985): 20.

exclusively an ordering and organization of a world constituted by our experience.⁴⁵

In other words, our vision of reality depends to a large extent on whose eyes are doing the looking.

Following that logic, feminists charge that family therapy constructs the family by ignoring its social contexts and that this is the inevitable outcome of a way of constructing theory and practice that ignores its social contexts. Feminists argue for nothing less than the inclusion of the therapist in family therapy.⁴⁶ Feminists ask us to take seriously ourselves and our biases as therapists, and the patriarchy in all its evidences. A boundary cannot be drawn at the edge of the "family," calling all that which is within it a "system" without regard to the influence of the encompassing spheres. Watzlowick, however, has raised fears that expanding the discussion in this direction would expose family therapy to the risk of falling headlong into an "infinite regression," and this is an argument widely used to argue against wider context.⁴⁷

Finally, with regard to epistemology, and countering Watzlawick's premises, Weldon⁴⁸ discussed a systemic

⁴⁵ Glasserfeld, quoted in James C. Coyne, "Toward a Theory of Frames and Reframing: The Social Nature of Frames," Journal of Marital and Family Therapy 11, no. 4 (1985): 338.

⁴⁶ Taggart, 119.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 120.

⁴⁸ A. Weldon, System and Structure, 2nd ed. (New York: Tavistock, 1980).

approach that includes context as a core element. Three closely-related operations concepts interplay in the systems context: punctuation, closure and boundary. "The punctuation of a pattern by an observer is an act of closure which established the boundary of a system and, by the same act, calls the system's context into being and fixes its boundary."⁴⁹

And who are the punctuators of family systems theory? Just as the punctuators of every "ecosystem" we consider--natural, social, psychological, economic--they tend to be, individually and collectively, white, male, industrialized, affluent and usually Protestant.

Feminists take issue with many other points of traditional family theories. Mention is made of the various forms of clinical paradox of women, seen as too powerful, yet not powerful enough;⁵⁰ the issue of sex-role complementarity (separate does not mean equal), the preoccupation with the mother's inadequacies, blame-the-mother most recently having gone underground to resurface as a romance with dad;⁵¹ the focus on triangles to the detriment of focus on dyads; the assumption of the nuclear family as normative, and the therapist's actual abuse of women in "small betrayals" in service to a larger goal. For example, woman pas-

⁴⁹ Taggart, 120.

⁵⁰ Goldner, 36-7.

⁵¹ Ibid., 40.

toral counselors under the tutelage of male supervisors often bend over backwards to understand a husband's patriarchal viewpoint in order to balance out a natural identification with a wife's plight. In another vein, Goldner writes, "We utilize (mom's) very centrality we challenge, we rely on the very traits of character we critique, and in essence, without realizing it, we exploit women's helpless social position, all in service of gaining therapeutic leverage."⁵² Too many times the woman is sacrificed for the health of the family.

Synthesis and Solutions

Recently, two major texts have been published. Feminist Family Therapy: A Casebook by Thelma Goodrich, et al., shows how family therapy, in its pursuit of "parsimony and impartiality" had in fact, narrowed the notion of system and ignored--even reinforced--societal and familial oppression of women.⁵³ The family is an important place for feminist study for three reasons:

1. It serves as the fundamental source of transmission of culture in society.
2. The family is generally considered the province and place of power for women, and so deserves scrutiny.
3. It is first in the family where children learn what it means to be girl or boy, male or female, woman or man--

⁵² Ibid., 39.

⁵³ Goodrich, et al.

definitions which are steeped with stereotypical notions and role constrictions.

The authors critique the so-called ideology of the "normal" family and discuss the various problems such an ideology presents to therapists and families. As a case-book, it offers of a variety of clinical studies, calling for reformations and change in theory, practice and training of family therapists.

A second major ground-breaking book is The Invisible Web: Gender Patterns in Family Relations, written by Marianne Walters, et al.⁵⁴ Pulling together many of the ideas expressed by the various authors in previous journal articles and coming together despite their representing different schools of family therapy,⁵⁵ they come up with a compassionate yet radical new way of looking at couples interactions, family dynamics, mother-daughter, father-son interactions. The plight of women in patriarchal society remains a central focal point though they also point out how male role constrictions have served to hurt men as men, husbands, lovers and fathers as well.

⁵⁴ Walters, et al.

⁵⁵ Betty Carter presents a transgenerational model of family therapy with roots in Bowen systems therapy and theory; Olga Silverstein practices an evolved intergenerational systematic method with roots in Milan, Bowen, and Milton Ericksonian schools; Peggy Papp practices a systemic/strategic method with roots in MRI, Milan and Milton Erickson; and Marianne Walters utilizes a model of therapy evolved from structural theory to "concepts of context and parameters of change." Ibid., 12.

A feminists' critique of family therapy is an occasion for the elaboration and renewal of systematic therapy. Several points are beginning to provide a basis for some theoretical models of feminist family therapy. As Taggart mentioned, we must struggle with the implications of context, boundaries, punctuation, etc., before rushing into a new school of family therapy. Hard questions must be asked of family therapy as it is now practiced, such as

is it the most ethical, effective and humane treatment of women? Are the assumptions on which family therapy is based too deeply entrenched in patriarchal thought, as some feminists argue?⁵⁶

In spite of the work that has been done by feminists in mental health fields, the therapeutic systems have really changed very little over all. Many pastoral counselors, as well as family therapists in diverse fields, have yet to even ask basic questions such as, if systems theory as it is now known is amenable to change, what would it look like? For example, if we define everything in terms of power, are we not defining the family according to the world view of men? What about moving from power to competency?

Second, epistemology is a key issue. The feminist viewpoint must be taken seriously because the handling of gender issues determines the quality of life for all women. Actually, if system ideas are true, gender issues impact everyone. Context is an all-important concept. It is

⁵⁶ Wheeler, 55.

impossible for therapists NOT to act out of their own experience; their doing therapy has everything to do with their age, ethnicity, gender, sibling position, experience, value and belief system, and so forth. We simply must make the choice to do this consciously. It will happen, to some extent, unconsciously regardless.⁵⁷

Third, it does not appear that any one method of family therapy is necessarily inherently more sexist than others. Concepts such as hierarchy, boundaries and reciprocity can be given sexist or feminist content. Recently literature has begun to provide case studies of therapy done by feminists who consider themselves therapists of the strategic, Bowenian, structural, functional, behavioral and psychodynamic persuasions. Feminist family pastoral counseling has yet to be impacted. Much more material needs to be provided to the public in the future.

Fourth, the family is the major vehicle for reproducing the patriarchal order of the wider society. Feminist viewpoint precludes a romanticized vision of the family (specifically as traditional in functionalist and cybernetic models of the family) as "harmoniously interdependent." Feminism takes a hard look at the

structural constraints against domestic happiness (of heterosexual love), challenges the vision we all still maintain of the family as a "haven in a heartless world. . . ." It is one thing to see

⁵⁷ Betty Carter, "Ms. Intervention's Guide to 'Correct' Feminist Family Therapy," Family Therapy Networker 9, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1985): 78.

the public world of work as hierarchical and unfair, quite another to entertain the idea that love and family, the historic antidotes to the harshness of the marketplace, are themselves vehicles of human domination.⁵⁸

Fifth, circularity must not be utilized to blame the victim.⁵⁹ The power of weakness may have been overemphasized to the exclusion of the abuse of power. Claudia Bepko turns a familiar family therapy cliché upside down when she writes, "for women, symptoms are not a means of control, they are a reinforcement of oppression."⁶⁰ At the same time, feminists are tackling the hard questions of how and why women collude in their domination. In so doing, such feminists are giving full recognition to the ways in which patriarchy fosters this inherently. The roots of oppression run deep. As Goldner points out, "male privilege and female masochism are structured into the psyche and into the social arrangements of everyday life."⁶¹ Nothing less than social upheaval is needed.

Sixth, the role of the feminist family therapist includes several functions. One may be a teaching function: "helping family members expand their repertoire of functions by learning how to perform those their socialization has not

⁵⁸ Goldner, "Warning," 21-2.

⁵⁹ Michele Bograd, "Family Systems Approaches to Wife Battering: A Feminist Critique," Journal of American Orthopsychiatric Association 54, no. 4 (October 1984): 558-68.

⁶⁰ Goldner, "Feminism," 49.

⁶¹ Goldner, "Feminism," 44.

permitted them to acquire."⁶² The question is then asked, is it always the therapist's task to strive for more egalitarian relationships in the family? Avis answers unequivocally yes: "If family functioning is not to be promoted at the expense of women, it is essential that power imbalances between men and women in the family be reduced."⁶³ Joy and David Rice also underscore the teaching role as facilitating a woman's questioning, probing and recognizing various societal role expectations and helping her to explore new roles and models.⁶⁴ The female family therapist can also model female success and competence and other nonstereotyped behavior for her clients.⁶⁵ Finally, the feminist therapist should be an active proponent of alternative life-styles and sex roles, rather than being "passively client-centered."⁶⁶ Another possible role for the feminist family therapist is that of "expert." Marianne Riche points out "the client may be expert about what he or she wants to change, but the therapist is expert about HOW. That is the basis of the

⁶² Avis, "The Politics," 134.

⁶³ Ibid., 135.

⁶⁴ Joy K. Rice and David G. Rice, "Implications of the Women's Liberation Movement for Psychotherapy," American Journal of Psychiatry 130, no. 2 (Feb. 1973): 193.

⁶⁵ Avis, "The Politics," 133.

⁶⁶ Rice, 194.

therapeutic contract."⁶⁷

Seventh, several "warnings" seemed particularly noteworthy. Feminists should not "force-feed clients politically correct solutions" but neither should they trivialize a fundamental conflict into a series of separate problems to be solved one by one."⁶⁸ An example of a conflicted compromise in this case study became, "She'll sleep in her own room three times a week, with him the other four." Again, equality cannot come about by sheer clinical acumen, but therapists can be extremely helpful to people struggling to find a way to be together when so much divides them. And it probably goes without saying that timing of interventions is absolutely essential in family therapy.

Eighth, while techniques are less important than an overall vision, feminism refuses to be simply involved in problem-solving, which Betty Carter describes as "shifting around the deck chairs on the Titanic."⁶⁹ The process by which the symptom is alleviated is equally important. To the question of whether a technique is ethical if it demeans women but works to alleviate the symptom, Betty Carter simply responds, "So did the Inquisition . . . the medium is

⁶⁷ Marianne Riche, "The Systemic Feminist," Family Therapy Networker 8, no. 3 (May-June 1984): 43.

⁶⁸ Goldner, "Feminism," 45.

⁶⁹ Betty Carter, 78.

the message, to coin a phrase."⁷⁰ Layton writes about the vision of structural realignments of gender in the family and says, "Techniques arise from our visions, not the reverse."⁷¹

Finally, feminist family therapy requires a commitment to working as community agents of social change apart from the business of psychotherapy. Rice lists working in caucuses, lobbying for legislative change, educating the community, working with influential groups, etc., as ways of impacting the wider social context⁷² and almost every feminist recognizes the therapist's role in social change agent in the wider political scene as being essential in creation of a more egalitarian society.

Hope is a piece of the patchwork not to be left out of the quilt. Feminist theology calls for hope, in the sense of dreaming radically and fabulously; in a similar way faith finds hope indispensable, and family therapists could not continue to work if they did not believe change possible for individuals, for families, for larger systems. The greatest hope is that change will come in time to save nothing less than the entire planet as system. As Taggart reminds us, the stakes are high for transforming the oppositional and exploitative relationships of our common life:

⁷⁰ Ibid., 78.

⁷¹ Ibid., 27.

⁷² Rice, 195

man/woman, self/other, white/Third World, organism/environment, mind/nature, theory/practice, therapist/client, etc.--into those relations of nonexploitive difference, without which all systems perish.⁷³

Conclusions

Women's spirituality and psychology are interrelated. Both feminist theology and psychology make a point that the connections of mind, body, emotions and spirituality are crucial in a wholistic understanding of the well-being for women. Helping to facilitate changes in personal images of God can come about in several ways, particularly with the healing of fundamental early relationships, either through individual object relations therapy, as one example, or through the healing of the actual relationships themselves in feminist family therapy sessions. But this is not to say that these two therapies are the conclusive ones for women in pastoral counseling. Certain other issues must be discussed when it comes to beginning to formulate a model for feminist pastoral counseling. These issues will be described in the final chapter.

⁷³ Taggert, 124.

CHAPTER 7

Theory and Techniques of Feminist Pastoral Counseling:
Therapy as Holograph of Wider Community ChangeA New Place for Theology in Pastoral Counseling

In a nuclear age, in this post-modern time when new ways of thinking¹ call into question much of what we have always believed to be ontologically true and according to God's nature (if not God's then human nature), nothing is so critical as the fate and well-being of the people, the earth and all its life forms. The philosophy of Cartesianism or modern philosophical idealism underlies the various oppositional dichotomies with the locus of evaluation being individual as objective reasoning entity. This is the basis for the various dualities of culture against nature, populations versus the environment, science replacing spirituality. We need radical need new ways of envisioning, new language, new means of thinking about living with integrity (reintegration). People from areas labeled as lower classes, the other hemisphere, the second and third worlds are crying out about survival that can only come through a reconnection with both the earth itself and our ancestors with a view to

¹ Read here new races, nationalities, genders and classes of people are now being heard from whereas before their voices were silent, lost, erased, censored or shouted over.

the future--not just for our children but dare we even to speak it?--to the seventh generation. This will require, as Brock writes, both a change of heart with the revaluing of many principles once relegated to the feminine and a change in societal structures that perpetuate patriarchy.

Survival is about life. Survival is also about richness and fullness of life. It can no longer be simply defined in the materialistic, individualistic, heterosexual,² middle-class anglo capitalist mentality. Such a patriarchal viewpoint prizes all life solely for its monetary values. Furthermore, it and defines what is real, true, valuable and important as opposed to what is impractical, silly, impossible, implausible, illogical and unreasonable and believes its definitions to be universal. Mary Daly, Audre Lorde, Gerda Lerner, Ann Wilson Schaef and many, many forerunners have pointed out the incomprehensible death-dealing ways in which the use of dualisms have been skewed into "doubletalk." For Susan Thistlethwaite, critiquing liberal Protestant theology and calling upon the works of black women writers such as Lourde, Walker, Toni Morrison, Zora Neale Hurston and Toni Cade Bambara,

survival is the fullness of life, the solidarity between the ancestry of the planet and the race to

² See for example: Carter Heyward, "Heterosexual Theology: Being Above It All," Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 3 (Spring 1987): 29-38; Heyward, Speaking of Christ; and John Fortunato, Embracing the Exile: Healing Journeys for Gay Christians (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982).

come. And you cannot find that vision in Plato or his heirs.³

Only a new social order, a restructuring of society in ways which are nonhierarchical, pluralistic and life-giving for all concerned, can bring about fullness of life.

The social order cannot be divorced from our individual lives. Sociology has attested that the family is the basic unit for perpetuating patriarchal values. Adrienne Rich has depicted how motherhood itself has been thoroughly infiltrated with patriarchal depictions of how things ought to be. In our personal lives we have experienced a tremendous "loss of linkage" to our mother, father, family, friends or ideology, says Jean Houston.⁴ Alienation is a major problem among white middle-class North Americans, particularly males, as Bellah noted. The metaphor Kohlbenschlag uses for the contemporary person is that of an orphan

seeking a deeper bond, a wider linkage: the rediscovery of our connections with it all, with everything in creation, with birth and death, reproduction and destruction, dissipation and waste, reintegration and preservation--the return to Gaia. This is the key to the orphan's finding his or her true home. Our true home is in the structures of kinship and sharing, the gift circles, that we create to honor our bond with Gaia.⁵

³ Susan B. Thistlethwaite, "God and Her Survival in a Nuclear Age," Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion 4, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 84.

⁴ Jean Houston, "On Therapeia," Dromenon 3, no. 3: 37-41.

⁵ Kohlbenschlag, 172.

The basis of a new social order is a theological revolution, states Sam Keen in The Face of the Enemy.⁶ Carol Christ has affirmed that patriarchal attitudes of the vast majority of people whose religious faith is based in the Bible will not be changed until the image of God is changed.⁷ Horst Eberhard Richter, addressing our human and cultural condition from both a psycho-analytic and social psychological point of view, says that Western civilization, molded by science, technology and industry, has been released from a sense of powerlessness in the world. Instead, patriarchy believes wholeheartedly in its ability to define, manage, and control. The "All Mighty" of God has now become the all mighty of Western Civilization, and so modern spirituality has become pathology. He makes connections between modern Western culture's obsession with greed, sex, consumptions of every kind on the one hand and the repression of women, flight from feelings and disowning of suffering on the other. The dominant male culture is inculcated for this repression of sensitivity that could yield the capacity for humanitarian values.

It is essential that we acknowledge and reintegrate into our lives the emotional fragility,

⁶ Sam Keen, The Face of the Enemy: The Psychology of Enmity (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 172.

⁷ Christ, Laughter, 61.

weakness and suffering which are repressed, both physically and socially.⁸

The solution is not to go back to the "All Mighty" attributions of God; conceptualizations and the images of God must change. For some this means depatriarchalizing God; for others it means demilitarizing God; for others it means re-imagining God as Goddess, friends, Mother, World, Gaia. In any case, re-imagining the personal deity and reimagining the culture's deity go together, just as personal and cultural change cannot be separated.

An individual's spirituality is informed first by parents and close family members, but then also by teachers, friends, and community. Our ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds influence our image of God and our expressions and perceptions of spirituality. Beliefs, intellectual positions and moral stances also are involved. Both conscious and unconscious, both personal and communal, a person's spirituality is mediated by family situation, gender, and sexual orientation as well as generation in history. Some theologies and deity images, as discussed in chapter 6, are better than others for women and children and the fate of the earth. Rita Nakashima Brock has shown us how a theology that glorifies suffering, even through redemption of the death of one man, Jesus, establishes abuse as at best

⁸ Horst Eberhard Richter, All Mighty: A Study of the God Complex in Modern Man, trans. Jan van Haurck (Claremont, Calif.: Hunter House, 1984), xvii. Discussed at length by Kohlbenschlag, chapter 6.

"simply part of life" and at worst discouraging active struggle to eliminate suffering, even glorifying martyrdom, pain and suffering as redemptive. Brown and Bohn have put together a book which makes clear those connections of Christianity, patriarchy and abuse. Utilizing a pragmatic norm of promoting the equality and well-being of all people, theologians no longer ignore the relationship between certain prevalent interpretations of traditional theologies most represented by the dogma, ritual, polity and hierarchy of the churches and congregations with racism, sexism, homophobia, family violence as well as anti-Judaism, anti-Semitism, imperialism and colonialism. Clearly, such theologies need to be deconstructed and critiqued, reinterpreted, reinvented or abandoned.

Liberation theologians--black theologians, Latin American theologians, feminist theologians, Minjung theologians--all are working to conceptualize a God and a theology that is liberating for people.⁹ Pastoral Counselors can take

⁹ It is important for white pastoral counselors to be aware that some deity images which are liberating for white women may not be for black women. For example, Linda Mercante, in Renita Weems, et al, "Roundtable on Racism," speaks of why it is black women may not be as enthusiastic about the maternal and immanent images white women find so freeing; Mercante states such images call up stereotypical images of the mammy. At the same time, black women may find an omnipotent God and vindicating Jesus liberating for such a God who is on the side of the oppressed, is also in control, in spite of all other appearances. In other words, for many blacks there is hope that the books will be balanced by a powerful, caring, liberating god, if not in this world then in the next. Finally, Mercante notes that the church has always been filled with "strong, spiritually powerful, liberated black women."

advantage of the literature that is coming out about such reconceptualizations. Such knowledge would be important to the enterprise of helping individuals, couples and families find a spirituality and an image of deity that is congruent with their experience. Being able to provide ideas for new images may help to liberate them from oppression through empowerment and hope, give them comfort or at least stamina in the face of sorrow. The new symbols and images which open up possibilities for Christianity to be moved from its anti-Jewish, patriarchal and exclusivist identity could help to break down barriers between people, communities and religious groups so that we might work together in solidarity for the sake of humanity and the earth.

We have long since given up the idea that any counseling is or can be value-free. People often choose pastoral counselors over other brands of therapists because they believe that a pastoral counselor would respect and value the role their spirituality plays in their lives. Because of this, and because of a pastoral counselor's training in psychology of religion and understanding faith symbols, a pastoral counselor may be chosen as the best one to help them grapple with spiritual and religious issues and dimensions as well as to help them solve their problems.

Recently in the history of pastoral counseling, particularly as it has defined itself in and through the American Association of Pastoral Counselors, the question of

what is pastoral about pastoral counseling has been a critical one. Similarly the question arises: just what differentiates the specialization of pastoral counseling from other disciplines of psychotherapy?

Because the AAPC has chosen to hold high standards for competence in both psychological theory as well as counseling skills and techniques before it accredits its membership, great emphasis is placed on educating and training persons specializing in the pastoral counseling ministry to have background and skills comparable to any other mental health professional. This emphasis is in addition to requirements for a sound academic background in theology. Still, one overarching goal is for AAPC accredited counselors to be every bit as competent in diagnosing and doing therapy as any licensed counselor, psychiatric social worker or psychologist.

In an effort to differentiate accredited mainstream pastoral counselors from other clergy who make counseling their specialty ministry (such as those who have no academic education in psychology nor any training in doing psychotherapy but none-the-less hang out their shingle as a "Christian counselor"), we¹⁰ have been wary of defining ourselves solely in terms of particular techniques of counsel-

¹⁰ As a Fellow in the organization (a member allowed to practice supervision under a Diplomate's supervision), having worked on membership committees and attended conferences at the regional and organizational level, technically I could call myself part of the "we" of the organization.

ing such as the use of prayer, scripture reading, healing rituals, evangelism, prescribing religious bibliotherapy, sermonizing and the like. On the contrary, these particular religious tools have been overused and misused by so many of our clergy brothers and sisters that we¹¹ have been embarrassed ourselves by them and mortified by the terrible harm that has been done to counselees in the name of God and our denominations.¹² To defend ourselves against being implicated as offensive practitioners using spurious psychological techniques thinly masquerading for evangelism--to avoid any implications in the accusations of substandard therapy practices called down upon all of our heads by the allied health professionals--we mainstreamers have defined pastoral counseling differently. Rather than relying upon certain techniques, we have chosen instead to define ourselves in terms of the ways we undergird what we do by a theological framework. We justify our standing to both secular therapists and our clergy siblings through our ability to

¹¹ The royal "we" here means my colleagues and acquaintances in the AAPC and me. It must be stated that I cannot truly speak for the organization at large.

¹² A major agenda of C.P.E. is to help student chaplains "take authority" to be chaplains, to help them learn the appropriate counseling skills and not to retreat too quickly to the sanctity of certain religious practices which in actuality often function not to comfort the patient but to distance the chaplain from the patient's pain and anguish, and to stifle their cries of naming their own experience. Similarly in introductory pastoral counseling courses there is always a class response of horror and titillation in the sharing of stories about clergy malpractice in the hospital, funeral home or counseling office.

analyze a particular problem in theological language. From there we proceed with the best that our training in all aspects of general developmental and psychological theory, diagnostic evaluation and technical training our supervisory counseling hours has had to offer. Truth be told, the way we counsel is not much different from the way in which any other professional counselor counsels. This is not a bad thing. It is certainly an improvement upon the evangelism masquerading as counseling some of us did as neophytes, and which continues to be done by some of the nonaccredited "religious counselors" practicing on the basis of their ordination certificate alone.¹³

My thesis is that for feminist pastoral counseling, the spiritual values and theological underpinnings would come out from under the covers. Instead of being in the background, these values would be foremost and foreground. What would differentiate feminist pastoral counseling from mainstream pastoral counseling is the absolute priority given to the prophetic revaluation that comes about through the integration of feminist psychology and feminist theology. This revaluation would not be a rigid set of particular standards held as either ontologically true nor claimed absolutely as affiliated with divine will. The standards for value need not be rigid dogma, nor would one particular

¹³ This is not to absolve all of the AAPC membership of any substandard counseling methods, any more than any organization can guarantee the expertise or ethics of all of its members.

image of god or way of expressing spirituality fit every client. Indeed the fluidity with which these values move and have their being is in the context of cultural, racial and ethnic heritage. An example is the stress white feminist spirituality places on the immanent empowering qualities of the spirit which are valued so highly for white women's understanding and experience of the spirit moving in and through kinship and connections with others. While immanentism is valued in the black church, it may not have the same priority in womanist communities where it is important to stress a powerful liberator God who is on the side of the oppressed and will right injustices if not in this world then in the next. Similarly, white middle-class women may appropriate a particular understanding of participation in sinful behavior as our active conscious and unconscious participation in the evil structures of racism and classism; our laxity in educating ourselves concerning these issues and our timidity in combatting the structures of patriarchy at large and racism and classism in our own lives. Hispanic women might define their understanding of sin in a different way, as may lesbians, as may Jewish women, and so forth. However, broadly speaking, the pragmatic norm is the one held in common by liberation theologies. What is of value is what liberates oppressed people and empowers them to work on their own behalf. What is of value is what converts oppressors and enables them not only to value themselves but

value others and to work on behalf of the well-being of others. What is of value is that which extends interrelationship, connection and care of the earth so that we may yet have a place to call home.

This does not mean that feminist pastoral counselors must label themselves as such in the yellow pages nor does it mean we begin to evangelize feminism itself in any inappropriate or ineffective way, pouring it down recalcitrant clients' throats. Rather than lecturing or indoctrination, the therapist can help the client feel freed up by her newfound sense of self-definition rather than simply weighed down by personal-political pain. To be a feminist pastoral counselor means that when we need to articulate it, we can be clear that our pastoral theology is deeply informed by feminist liberation theology. It also means that feminist theology and feminist psychology informs the way we understand individual and family dynamics, human nature, and our understanding of the deity.

A New Task for Pastoral Counselors

My second point is this: pastoral counselors should have an additional expertise. They should be the very best therapists at understanding issues of psychology of religion; in particular the way in which personal God images form and change throughout the life cycle. Fowler has done some important work here in delineating some framework for

understanding how faith develops and changes over time.¹⁴ But the new theories of object relations and God images have scarcely touched the pastoral counseling field.¹⁵ Furthermore, as pastoral counselors begin to understand object relations theories they may begin to have a working base on which to discuss how to appropriate such insights to help clients and communities transform outdated residual God images or to help them reformulate ones which have proved to be oppressive into ones which prove more liberating. This dissertation describes some of the background and theory providing the foundation describing how psychology and theology can come together under feminist theory, providing some new values and thus to chart some directions for women's well-

¹⁴ James Fowler has presented his theory of faith development in Stages of Faith (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981); and Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985). His work has led to lively debate concerning whether a structural-developmental model is the best way for understanding faith (especially in light of the way Fowler divorces process and content). Another debate is how to appropriate his ideas in terms of ministry with congregations and individuals. His latest book, Faith Development and Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) attempts to discuss a broad understanding of pastoral care which includes the prophetic; it consists of "all the ways a community of faith, under pastoral leadership, intentionally sponsors the awakening, shaping, rectifying, healing, and on-going growth in vocation of Christian persons and community, under the pressure and power of the in-breaking Kingdom of God" (p. 21). An excellent synopsis of his theory, written by Fowler himself, along with a variety of critiques, debates and expansions on his theory may be found in Faith Development and Fowler, eds. Craig Dykstra and Sharon Parks, (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1986).

¹⁵ There is one group that meets regularly at the annual meetings whose special interest is object relations; it stems from the Danielson Institute group and other Boston University affiliates.

being in the 1990s. I have suggested two particular implications for how this affects the field of pastoral counseling: that of redefining theology in terms of foreground for feminist pastoral counseling and how pastoral counseling might begin to appropriate what object relations is beginning to teach us about how God images form and change. Another volume would need to be written to build upon this theory. Nevertheless, there are seven principle areas I would like now to discuss, however briefly, which are crucial issues for feminist pastoral counseling in helping women toward individual and community well-being. They have to do with the anger, empowerment, mentoring, education, community support, iconoclasm, and ritual. All of these would be important components for a future model for feminist pastoral counseling. They also have important corollaries in terms of how it is groups of people become empowered to work for their own liberation within communities. Finally, I have found through reading faith stories, in compiling case studies and in examining clients' faith journeys that these seven issues have also proven to be play a critical role in the transformation of personal God images and the reformulations of women's sense of self.

Anger

Not all feminists believe one can combine the profession known as psychotherapy with feminist theory, so misogynist are some of its theoretical roots and its

practices. Mary Daly defines therapist as "the/rapist: a psycho-ologist who practices what he preaches/teaches."¹⁶ She defines psychology as a "disturbed and disturbing area of academentia: field favored by women-haters," and illustrates this with a quote from Karl Menninger who wrote:

Who can look fairly at the bitterness, the hatefulness, the sadistic cruelty of Adolf Hitler without wondering what Hitler's mother did to him that he now repays to millions of other helpless ones? We must remind ourselves again and again that the men by whom women are frustrated are the grown-up sons of mothers who were chiefly responsible for the personality of their sons.¹⁷

Sarah Hoagland deplores therapy, calling it paid friendship. Psychotherapy, done by pastoral counselors or psychiatrists has been critiqued in the literature for being sexist, classist and racist; having as its primary goal the individual's "social adjustment" rather than transformation of society or individual.

From critiques of Freud, through the famous Broverman study, through the important work of Phyllis Chesler, through current critiques written by a people from a variety of different racial, ethnic and national backgrounds,

¹⁶ Daly, Webster's First, 230.

¹⁷ Karl Menninger and Jeanetta Lyle Menninger, Love Against Hate (New York: Harcourt, 1942), 117-88, as quoted in Daly, Webster's First, 221. Actually, Alice Miller's research on Adolph Hitler in For Your Own Good, showed that he was probably whipped or punched daily by his father, and that the patriarchal ideals of absolute parental control and unquestioning responsive obedience were child-rearing techniques utilized for several generations of German children before the rise of the Third Reich.

therapy as it is usually practiced by the mainstream has been criticized for its upper-middle class, white, provincial, androcentric value system and its power of discourse, which is to name that which is normal and appropriate, and that which is not.¹⁸ However, one of the major reasons a feminist pastoral counseling stance must come about is because of traditional attitudes of patriarchal psychology and patriarchal theology toward the issues of anger and empowerment, especially as these relate to minority persons.

Women's anger terrifies both women themselves and the men around them. It is forbidden for a woman to express anger; it is unladylike, unprofessional and un-Christian. Anger in Phase I is usually suppressed and turned into depression. Anger in Phase II may be turned into anxiety. But anger, feminist therapists agree, is crucial for the development of a healthy sense of self in patriarchal society. Eichenbaum and Orbach, writing about anger, mention that for women, anger may begin with not receiving the kind of maternal nurturance from another human being that they are continually giving out to others: the elderly, the children, and the primary love relationship. Or anger may come from realizing that one never received such nurturance as a child and isn't receiving it presently either. Depres-

¹⁸ See for example, Becker, a portion called "The case against the profession," 110-4.

sion is a way of turning anger against oneself, for fear that anger--genuine and unadulterated--would "obliterate everyone."

Taking an even wider angle lens to the issue of anger, Greenspan notes that "coming to love oneself as a woman has everything to do with getting very angry about this [patriarchal] state of affairs."¹⁹ Here she is speaking about women's deep-seated conviction of powerlessness and suppressed rage:

People without power, people who look around at the world and do not see themselves reflected in it, learn to feel marginal, unimportant. People for whom the social order shows contempt learn to hate themselves. Powerlessness breeds depression. Feeling good about oneself has something to do with power, with having power and feeling powerful; with being rooted in one's body and believing in one's sense of agency--that is, one's capacity to exert power. Psychically speaking, women's oppression consists largely in being deprived of a sense of agency. How can a woman believe in her power in a thoroughly male society in which all the major institutions are run by men, and in which culture itself is male? A deep-seated conviction of powerlessness and suppressed rage is what is commonly called depression.²⁰

Feminist psychologists are not the only ones who have noted the relationship between anger and power. Carolyn Heilbrun, author of Writing a Woman's Life, notes,

Nostalgia, particularly for childhood, is likely to be a mask for unrecognized anger. If one is not permitted to express anger or even to recog-

¹⁹ Greenspan, 194.

²⁰ Ibid.

nize it within oneself, one is, by simple extension, refused both power and control.²¹

Heilbrun discusses how women writers were universally condemned when they exhibited any tone of anger. (Virginia Woolfe's Three Guineas is such an example.) Therefore women writers, forbidden anger, could not find a voice in which publicly to complain and so "took refuge in depression or madness." Part of the anger comes from prescriptions by society for the centrality a man should hold in a woman's life:

What does it mean to be unambiguously a woman? It means to put a man at the center of one's life and to allow to occur only what honors his prime position. Occasionally women have put God or Christ in the place of a man; the results are the same: one's own desires and quests are always secondary. For a short time, during courtship, the illusion is maintained that women, by withholding themselves, are central. Women are allowed this brief period in the limelight--and it is the part of their lives most constantly and vividly enacted in a myriad of representations--to encourage the acceptance of a lifetime of marginality. And courtship itself is, as often as not, an illusion: that is, the woman must entrap the man to ensure herself a center for her life. The rest of life is aging and regret.²²

Oppression, with the inherent inculcation of feelings of inherent powerlessness, is anger that results from insubordination. The realization that one is angry, has a right to be angry, and begins to express it--this is often the starting point for a new way of relating in the world. Many

²¹ Carolyn Heilbrun, Writing a Woman's Life (New York: Norton, 1988), 15.

²² Ibid., 21.

women, in discussing their spiritual journeys, talk about how anger helped them turn a corner on helplessness and perceived powerlessness. Barbara Hargrove spoke of her experience of being discriminated against because of her gender, offered a lower salary than the beginning salary of a male who had just left the position with one less degree. "I felt angry, felt that they were taking advantage of someone who was a captive housewife, not free to move to get a more lucrative position. My anger gave me the courage to do what I had previously been too timid to do. . . ." She sought out less patriarchal immediate surroundings for her work and relationships.²³

Anger is necessarily part of the consciousness of injustice. The ability to express anger at the appropriate root of oppression is healthy. Making progress through the passages of the Racial Identity Development begins with moving on from naivete concerning consciousness that influences one's view of oneself and the surrounding world. The movement is described in terms of naivete, acceptance, resistance, redefinition and internalization. Acceptance means a stage of consciousness wherein one follows the prevailing notion that "white is right." A black person who acquiesces to this viewpoint, either actively or passively weakens her or his self-concept or positive view of Black people. Anger is inherent at the stage of resistance where-

²³ Her story is recorded in Meadow and Rayburn, 64-79.

in one begins to realize the pervasive forces of racism in society and actively resists, learning more about personal racism and systemic racism.²⁴

Anger is part of the healing process of coming home to one's authentic sense for white women and people of color. Pastoral counselors can facilitate the positive resource of anger by (1) encouraging its expression, (2) helping to label the appropriate sources of anger: which means society as we know it, the dominant race or culture, males in their lives who misuse their power, powers that be, etc., (3) not diagnosing anger at the status quo as a camouflage for some "deeper" level of anger and (4) acknowledging the immediate situation that provokes the anger and problem-solving in terms of ways to confront the discrimination. Anger almost always takes the form not only of anger at patriarchy but anger at God, or prevalent patriarchal depictions of god (which is just about all we know). As Carol Christ writes,

I am suggesting that women call on God to take responsibility for the patriarchal histories in which God has been known--biblical, Christian and Jewish. . . . If the biblical tradition is viable, if Christians and Jews really experience a relation with God, then human dealings with God cannot be transacted simply on an intellectual level. The storytellers of the tradition have always known that. Nor need the community always express loving, humble feelings to God. Biblical tradition warrants the view that humans have a right and even a responsibility to question God,

²⁴ Bailey W. Jackson and Rita Hardiman, "Racial Identity Development: Implications for Managing the Multiracial Work Force," The NTI Managers' Handbook (Jan. 1989): 107-19.

to wrestle with God, until the answers to human questions are revealed.²⁵

In Phase III of women's spiritual journeys, anger is acknowledged as a healthy and appropriate response to injustice. Women may decide, like Daly, that the best way to deal with the anger is the withholding of power--to absent oneself as much as possible from patriarchy in non-participation. Paradoxically, Mary Daly's "profound rage has produced a feminist critique strong enough to assure that some minimal attention must be given it within ecclesiastical and academic circles."²⁶ But another way to use anger is to generate power. As Harrison writes,

We must wrest this power of action from our very rightful anger at what has been done to us and to our sisters and to brothers who do not meet patriarchy's expectations. The deepest danger to our cause is that our anger will turn inward and lead us to portray ourselves and other women chiefly as victims rather than those who have struggled for the gift of life against incredible odds. The creative power of anger is shaped by owning this great strength of women and of others who have struggled for the full gift of life against structures of oppression.²⁷

Anger is a signal that something is wrong in a relationship. When anger arises, there is energy to act. As middle-class white women confronted with anger of other groups of women and men concerning our participation in racism, classism or heterosexist attitudes and behaviors, we

²⁵ Christ, Laughter, 32.

²⁶ Harrison, "The Power of Anger, 5.

²⁷ Ibid., 7.

must realize they are asking for acknowledgement of their presence, their value, writes Harrison. Then we have two options for response.

We can ignore, avoid, condemn, or blame. Or we can act to alter relationship toward reciprocity, beginning a real process of hearing and speaking to each other. A Feminist moral theology, then celebrates anger's rightful place within the work of love and recognizes its central place in divine and human life."

Empowerment

One of the reasons participants in the women's movement often refrain from using religious language is because the category of religious language itself is fraught with androcentric definitions and parameters.²⁸ Paula Cooley notes that this is often the case when women begin to speak about power as it functions theologically. For example, conversion for women does not mean the ego-loss, passivity and surrender that has characterized male's experience of conversion. Rather conversion has often meant personal empowerment and social bonding to form active communities of resistance and change.³⁰ Cooley writes,

Perhaps the most pernicious effects of an almost exclusive focus on passivity and ego-loss in particular individuals have been their possibly indirect contributions to the privatization of experience, the reification of deity, and the illusion that such experience provides an alterna-

²⁸ Ibid., 15.

²⁹ See Judith Plaskow, "The Coming of Lilith: Toward a Feminist Theology," in Christ and Plaskow, Womanspirit Rising, 202.

³⁰ Ibid., 23-7.

tive to, by way of escape from, daily struggle in our ordinary lives."³¹

Cooey's discussion of conversion fits many of the women's spiritual journeys I researched. Though they rarely called it conversion, they spoke of "turning points" that led to a commitment to transforming existing conditions as a counterpart to recentering their personal and social lives in the wider context of community. It also meant conversion from living through patriarchal expectations for themselves, to a recentering of identity. Cooey puts it this way: "Women turn from a struggle to fulfill destructive cultural expectations, defined according to gender and turned to a positive sense of what it means to be a woman."³² A transformation of self-identity and a conversion to the other often go hand-in-hand. It is impossible to separate the psychological and the spiritual in the tradition dichotomies.

It stands to reason that conversion for women would be different than it would be in the traditional sense of ego surrender of a strongly individuated ego. Women often begin with a sense of powerlessness and individual fragmentation that comes from living at odds with one's true self. The movement is thus from powerlessness to empowerment, from experiencing oppression as powerlessness to experiencing

³¹ Ibid., 25.

³² Ibid., 27.

liberation as personal and social transformation.³³ Cooley advises that women retain a sense of ambivalence toward power because a dynamic tension between ambivalence and affirmation can provide for continued creativity.

Daphne Hampson clarifies why women feel ambivalent about power through illustrating the dilemma with three paradigms; powerfulness, powerlessness and empowerment.³⁴ The first two paradigms, "major ones in Judeo-Christian traditions, reflect a male structuring of reality" whereas feminists self-consciously and women in general, she contends, have a paradigm of mutual empowerment. She shows how the empowerment paradigm is not present in the Jewish and Christian traditions in any significant way and proposes what a model of God would be like if one were to be constructed on the basis of women's practice of empowerment.³⁵

From a feminist point of view, the idea of God as powerful (as seen through the eyes of tradition) is masculinist; God is seen as powerful because God is seen as separate, alone, self-sufficient, and wholly different, great and all-good. By contrast people are small and sinful. God is father, humanity made up of children. This problem has been discussed earlier in terms of what this does to women and, of course, the theodicy questions which

³³ Ibid., 36.

³⁴ Hampson, 234-50.

³⁵ Ibid., 234.

arise around issues such as, if God is so powerful, why doesn't God intervene? If God can intervene, then why doesn't God?

But God is powerfully on the side of the oppressed, states another version of the tradition, particularly theologies coming from black and Latin American communities. Many religious feminists take this stance as well. Hampson shares her personal spiritual journey, about a time she was involved in the Anglican movement for women's ordination. This time was pivotal for her as

It is in situations of extremity that one's understandings are formed, or broken. I learned more about power and powerlessness, about male power and female powerlessness in that situation than I have in any other.

She continues:

I shall not forget what it felt like to wear a T-shirt proclaiming 'Ordain Women Now', it having been forbidden by the police to carry banners, to be shoved behind barriers by the police to allow bishops to descend from their coaches, whom one was not impeding and some of whom were one's friends, and then to watch a procession in Westminster Abbey of hundreds upon hundreds of men, knowing that oneself and all other women were a priori excluded from being bishops because of our sex. What did it mean then, down on one's knees on the cold floor of Westminster Abbey to hear a woman's voice ring out with the words of the lesson: 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' I was in tears. So God was for us? But then there dawns on one the depth and extent of sexism, throughout all known human societies in all times and all countries. What then? Indeed what when one see that the very notion of God which Christians have held serves to re-enforce that sexism? Then one can no longer keep goodness and God

together. The only exit (other than atheism) is to change one's conception of God.³⁶

The second traditional paradigm is that of powerlessness, God's kenosis, self-emptying through Jesus Christ. The interlocking of self-emptying and service to others is implicit in the model. It is the paradigm of sacrifice of self leading to nurture of others. Hampson, like many other feminists, find this inappropriate for women, and feminist women, as discussed in Chapter 4, find this self-sacrifice and surrender to be problematic. It makes resistance to injustice look unChristian. A stronger stance, rather than to look to the suffering of Jesus for commiseration is to look to the living struggles of women for mutual liberation. Hampson alludes to this when she writes about her friend, Arinda, imprisoned and tortured for twenty years in a Chilean jail who asks not for liberation theology books, but for books on the struggle of women.³⁷

Empowerment is mutual empowerment, and it happens most often within a community of people who are struggling to gain integrity. Jean Baker Miller has spoken about how it is women heal, through recognizing there is something to be angry about, that it is not all one's fault, that there are

³⁶ Ibid., 237.

³⁷ I seem to remember an interview with Winnie Mandela where a woman reporter asked what gave her hope. Instead of speaking of God, she announced that what kept her going was knowing that others were involved in actively fighting for their liberation from apartheid.

structures that are oppressive. Then one is able to stop the process of inner self-destruction and begin the inner exodus described in Phase III. "Exodus . . . requires courage. It is a movement to being an outsider, but an outsider with new integrity," writes Hampson.³⁸ In her case she decided to leave the church, an exterior exit accompanying her inner exodus. Other exterior exits may come about in the form of exits from sexist relationships, sexist treatment at work, exits from codependent relationships with one's children and the like. Almost always, the empowering to make the exits from self-conscious subordination of self comes about in relationship with other women, "the crucible in which empowerment takes place, the matrix in which new insights are grasped."³⁹ This is what makes the empowerment interrelational and mutual. Similar to Carter Heyward's God who is power-in-relation, Hampson proposes a model of God that makes God "the sustainer of the web" of interrelationships of empowerment. In this way is empowerment for women an experience of conversion; of self identity and in a transformation of image of deity.

Letty Russell, in her latest book, Household of Freedom, connects authority with a new paradigm, partnership,

³⁸ Hampson, 242.

³⁹ Ibid., 243.

rather than domination.⁴⁰ She proposes empowerment in relation to partnership as the best model for interdependent public and private societies, and she does this using a methodology of interpreting authority from the perspective of those at the bottom of society. The theme of empowerment pervades both feminist psychology and feminist theology and it would also be a major component of any feminist pastoral counseling.

How is it that a therapist might help to empower a client? Empowerment comes from women bonding. Empowerment comes about in helping a woman find her voice, to hear her into speech, to elicit the true feelings that have been repressed, suppressed, denied or sublimated for so long; to help her name those feelings as well. These feelings may not make sense at first, nor are they particularly tolerable. Acting on a sense of empowerment may mean that the virtues of nicety are put aside, and this often means incurring displeasure from other people. There may be new and different intense feelings experienced through living in the present and finding glimpses of solutions, even effecting some solutions where one might have felt hopeless. In the process of gaining a strong conviction of one's own worth, right to self-development and authenticity, women may find strong aspirations toward accomplishment, others have a

⁴⁰ Letty Russell, Household of Freedom (Louisville: Westminster, 1987).

strong need for fighting for a valuable cause. Everything is changed, says J.B. Miller, because it is change itself for women to begin to react out of their own being; which is often to fly in the face of their appointed definition and their prescribed way of living. Miller's definition of power is

the capacity to produce change . . . which can include even moving one's own thoughts or emotions, sometimes a very powerful act. It also can include acting to create movement in an interpersonal field as well as acting in larger realms such as economic, social, or political arenas.⁴¹

Here again, the issue of empowerment is not simply an individualistic one but relates directly to issues of feminist ethics and feminist spirituality; in particular its concern for justice-making. In empowering each other, women have to find new patterns of relating. Instead of the competitive and non-supportive ways women have sometimes related to each other in the past, there needs to be a conscious struggle to "achieve authentic interdependent modes of relationship."⁴² Open conflict, as described by J.B. Miller,⁴³ is another critical aspect of mutual inter-relationships which yield empowerment.

⁴¹ Jean Baker Miller, "Women and Power," Women and Therapy 6, nos. 1-2 (1987): 1-10.

⁴² Ann Carr, in Conn, 54.

⁴³ See especially the concluding chapter to the second edition of Toward a New Psychology of Women for a further explanation of how difficult it still is for women today, ten years after her first edition, to engage in open conflict.

In feminist ethics, every woman, man and child is entitled by birth to respect, the respect of others as well as self-respect. So justice-making is a feminist act. The connections between individual self-respect, women's well-being and other dimensions of justice are explicated in her book, Making the Connections.⁴⁴ Similarly, Carter Heyward speaks of integrity and authenticity as self-respect. Self-respect is non-sentimentalized love and it is the prerequisite for acting on behalf of others because one must first be able to act on one's own behalf.⁴⁵ For feminist pastoral counselors, to know in the direction women are headed for their wholeness and well-being is to understand self-respect. Heyward explains this in full:

A self-respecting woman is one whose life is rooted in a sense of her own positive value. She acts in a knowledge that she is as valuable a member of the human family as anyone else, and no more so. She acts on the basis of cooperation, rather than competitive expectations. She has nothing to prove. She owes no explanation, no defense, certainly no apology for her strong self-love. A self-respecting woman is one who has come into a creative liberating power, and she knows that this power which many feminist call God is in fact ours, not simply hers. A power which is shared, collaborative, common. A self-respecting woman lives among us as some-one proud, someone humble, a woman grounded and vulnerable, able to be touched. A sister whose resources are available to us, a woman reserved, able to withhold as well as to give, able to receive or to reject whatever is given to her. A self-respecting woman knows that whatever genuinely enhances her own well-being enhances us all, and whatever does her

⁴⁴ Beverly Harrison, Making the Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics (Boston: Beacon, 1985).

⁴⁵ Heyward, "Is the Self-Respecting," 48.

no good, pays her no true respect, is bad for the whole human family."⁴⁶

Heyward goes on to say the same of a self-respecting man, and notes that to be either is difficult in our patriarchal society. Self-respect as a spiritual pilgrimage is not easy, for "neither women nor men are rewarded for living on the basis of a radical awareness that each and every person is valuable."⁴⁷

A self-respecting person also goes against strong patriarchal currents. As Bishop Tutu said in New York City, "Whenever people say to you, 'In this situation, we are neutral,' you can always know that they have taken a decision to side with the powerful."⁴⁸ Similarly, Heyward notes that men who, in the words of Mary O'Brien, "swim against the male-stream of competitive hegemony," move against currents of the public world of profit-oriented expectations. The man who is gentle and respects humanitarian values is likely to be labeled or held in contempt by patriarchal society.

Because she goes against the mainstream, an empowering self-respecting woman's activities and ideas may very well cause turmoil. They

⁴⁶ Ibid., 48.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 49.

⁴⁸ From a sermon given at Union Theological Seminary, New York, NY, 25 Oct. 1984, as quoted in Union News 3 (Jan. 1985): 2, noted in Heyward, "Is the Self-Respecting," 50.

may cause such a disturbance in the male-stream that it will likely be a drowning pool, an undertow which will most certainly suck down and destroy the most able female contender, if she attempts to forge these mighty currents by herself, alone."

Therefore, she needs every bit of support she can get, from pastor, to friends, to primary love relationship, to therapist, to church community, women's community and collegial relationships. In order to help facilitate a woman's coming to a sense of empowerment, or moving into Phase III in her psychological and spiritual journey and to help her function out of self-respect more times than not, feminist pastoral counselors may be able to utilize at least five particular elements that would be particularly helpful in empowering women. These five--mentoring, education, community support, iconoclasm and ritual--will be discussed below.

From psychoanalysis we get the idea that it is the relationship that heals. The goal is for the client to feel she is a person of value and to see her link with others. Sanity is a creative act. If therapy is an environment in which the woman can explore all of her feelings, and have her feelings mirrored back to her as they may not have been as a child, then she can make progress. At the same time, dialogue, as Gilligan has noted, may be important in therapy; perhaps more important for adult therapy than mirroring. The main issue is that there be a holding envi-

" Heyward, "Is the Self-Respecting," 51.

ronment wherein a woman can begin to explore herself deeply with all of her latent needs and wants and feverish yearning to be accepted unconditionally. The client's most important factor in the relationship is probably her felt need for change. The more desperate she feels her situation to be, the more initiative she may have to try to effect change for her part. By no means is this the same philosophy as person-centered therapy in the sense that all the woman needs to do is change herself; either her attitude or behavior or perception of the issue. On the contrary, not every problem in a woman's life is not her fault nor is every situation under her control. Sometimes what is needed most is the courage to help change or leave a relationship. Other times she may need to gather forces around her to confront an unjust situation in the workplace.

The therapist's most important factor in the relationship is herself as a person. The relationship is always crucial in the healing process. Less important are the techniques used, equalizing in many ways what therapy skills are involved--though these are important. Contrary to most feminist therapy ideals which usually denounce a hierarchical relationship between therapist and client, I believe that the therapy relationship is not one of equality in common sense or the word. My conviction is that the therapist ought to have expertise. Just as one would want to go to an expert lawyer, expert surgeon, expert professor

because one would expect to be helped, saved, enhanced through that relationships; in the same way, I believe that the therapist ought to be an expert in the field she represents. This is not to say that she ought to be omniscient or omnipotent. Certainly she is a fellow journeyer on the way to fulfillment, self-respect and well-being in the face of the mainstream. However, I think a feminist pastoral counselor ought to at least know the terrain in which a client may pass in her journey, if not know it personally. To know scope of the terrain is to hold out hope, to be able to see possible dangers ahead in order to help a woman as she moves toward more and more personal empowerment and self-respect. As Becker writes,

In turning to women therapists for their care, wisdom, intelligence, and decisiveness, women are also learning to respect each other. Here, finally they can see an image of woman as healer and nurturer in a positive light. Women can once again thrive on female care, which they may or may not have had permission to do since childhood. And they can safely allow themselves to admit their vulnerabilities without having to fear that the therapist will allow them to betray themselves to their insecurities.⁵⁰

An important note is in order here. In the last chapter I endorsed both object relations therapy and feminist family therapy as therapies helpful to women with problems of living and also contributing to a change and transformation of their particular God images. Though eclectic therapy is particularly popular in pastoral counseling at the

⁵⁰ Becker, 122.

present time, it is my experience that it is not possible to switch between these two particular modes of therapy. Once embarked upon, one must fulfill the therapy objectives within that one discipline. My experience with clients has proven that one should not switch from object relations individual therapy (wherein the client is the primary object of concern and her viewpoint is most essential) to the family systems therapy (the family as group tends to be the identified configuration). Such a radical change in therapy modes accomplished by one therapist (as opposed to transferring the family to a different therapist for family therapy) can serve to make the woman feel like a pawn in a family therapy pursuit in which she has already felt like she has been the central focus of the therapist. Whether this might be different in terms of feminist family therapy and object relations family therapy has yet to be determined.

Mentoring and Education

Very often in the faith journeys of women and men, but most certainly in the spiritual journeys of the women whose lives I have studied, mentoring and education have had a tremendous impact upon their lives in terms of empowerment, self-understanding and transformation. Time and again, reading women's literature, hearing about feminist theory, feminist spirituality or taking classes has a extraordinary effect on women's lives. Women scholars of religion often

speak of the turning points in their lives having to do with researching for a book, learning something in a class or meeting a special person in their lives who served as a mentor. Mentors tend to be a person ahead of oneself on the ladder of learning, either in age and experience, expertise and wisdom, background and gifts. Frequently scholars of religion have mentored other women in the profession.

Across the board, however, in almost every story, a woman began to be able to turn the corner toward self-respect because she learned something about that being her right, either through new knowledge coming her way or knowing someone who served as a mentor. Often the two have gone together. Sometimes the mentor has been a counselor, sometimes a pastor, sometimes a relative.

I have often offered a client reading on a subject matter which specifically had feminist content, or at least was written from a nonsexist point of view. Both men and women have expressed appreciation for books and other reading material on gender differences. For example, couples' reading together Schaef's Women's Reality has led to lively discussion and deeper self-understanding and change.⁵¹ When appropriate, I have recommended courses, lectures, films, etc. that will help people in their quest for their true inner selves and help to liberate them from repressive

⁵¹ This is true whether or not the women find themselves solidly encamped in what Schaef describes as the female system and the men firmly ensconced in the white male system.

stereotypical roles. In the same vein, I have suggested at times that church-goers experiment with a different denomination or a different local church wherein they might find persons of like-mind, similar heartfelt philosophy or justice-making opportunities or more personally appealing traditions of liturgy and ritual. Knowing different pastors and congregations for referral is important in helping people to find places where they can stretch and grow spiritually.

Whenever there is a positive transference, it seems to me, there are possibilities that the counselor may begin to take on some of the qualities of mentor for the client. In object relations work, wherein one purposely engages in remothering or reparenting, this is especially true. In feminist therapy, it is not unheard of for a therapist to share something of her own story, if she is particularly careful that this is done specifically to help with the client's journey, and not to place the therapist at the center of concern. Classical psychoanalysis has rightly been criticized by women for therapists' extreme withholding of themselves. That is, their role is to remain completely detached or personally opaque. Such withholding should be avoided with most women whose need for nurturing is high, especially at the beginning of therapy. Always careful to remain alert to boundary issues, a certain amount of sharing of perceptions, stories and experience by the counselor can

both help keep the therapist a living, breathing human being with clay feet (off the pedestal), and help the client to experience hope and mutuality in the ebb and flows of life experience.

At the same time, the therapist must be careful to be as authentic in her life as possible. As Becker writes, "The friend, like the woman therapist, must also learn to heed her own advice. If one woman knows enough to advise another to give up the harmful ethics of the past, she must unhook herself from her own past as well."⁵² One's own credibility is on the line, moreso as a mentor than as a friend.

Community Support

In the journey toward fulfillment and a greater sense of selfhood, what facilitates movement is a woman's realization that she is not alone. Too often women feel isolated; and indeed they may be out of touch with nurturing, supportive and inspiring relationships. Crucial to the emergence of the latest women's movement were the consciousness-raising groups that helped women to name and recognize shared experience. Groups found this liberating, energizing and healing. We have not outgrown this need.

In almost every woman's life story, relationships with other women have been the main sustenance for women during their most trying times. Beginning with mothers, grand-

⁵² Becker, 143.

mothers, aunts and sisters, then moving to girlfriends, chums, adult women friends and/or women lovers, again and again women name other women as their best friends. A feminist consciousness that is apparent in Phase III acknowledges the importance of the roles women play in each other's lives--as mentors, playmates, consolers, therapists, social workers, pastors. It is in women's friendship that the dream is safeguarded. In women's friendships Phase III is most easily facilitated. Several professional women noted that if it is true that male mentors opened the doors for their careers, it was their women friends and colleagues who kept them there, for as long as that is possible. Women friends also help others exit from unhealthy work places, situations and institutions. As Becker writes,

with the recent changes in women's place in society and in the way women now perceive their identities, women's friendships have changed as well. Whereas in the past women helped each other adapt, serving as safety valves to release pent-up feelings of loneliness, rage, and injustice, and as models of how to tolerate intolerable situations, women have now become the co-conspirators of change. Friendships between women now serve to protect women so that they do not betray their vision that change is desirable and possible. Because women are no longer intent on finding temporary remedies, excuses, or ways to hide from the reality of their situations, they now push each other to transform old pattern of impotence and indignity, encouraging each other to live closer to the potential of their dreams.⁵³

In women-only groups, such as women-church, Wicca, professional support groups, self-help groups and the like

⁵³ Ibid., 129.

women's narratives are heard and applauded, mourned, celebrated, confronted. Women realize that others share their same feelings, experience, hopes and oppressions. In women-only spirituality groups women can feel free to use new language, new images, new rituals and new theologies to describe their spiritual experiences. In women's groups, women can explore what it means to hold a self-development model rather than a self-denial model. Claiming and re-claiming the struggle in solidarity with others is crucial. One-on-one therapy cannot take the place of a women's support group, nor spirituality group, nor women-church, nor supportive personal friendships with other women. It is a sad truth that sometimes women will say to a therapist, "You are my only friend." In that sense, Sara Hoagland is right: therapy becomes a paid friendship. But on the other hand, therapy, if it goes well, can help facilitate a woman's ability to relate to other women and to seek out appropriate women's friendships.

Therapy can serve to help a woman in ways that friendships cannot always function, sheerly because some women's needs are too much for their friends to fulfill. Especially in situations where a woman has been so deprived as a child, she may have excessive needs for time and attention. This may present too much strain on personal friendships, so that women find, time and again, friends disappear.

Similarly therapy can help a woman see where her excessive sense of responsibility originates, but it is in friendships with other women where new patterns get practiced and put into play. True friends must be able to have clear boundaries in order that they can help a woman be clear on hers. Friends may not be able to do what a support group or therapy group can do to help a woman discerning when someone's perception of them is correct, or when it is distorted by anger or jealousy.

For a feminist pastoral counseling model, opportunities for referral to various different models of women's groups would be in order. Certainly a feminist pastoral counselor would want to have possibilities for referral, both those which are free and those which might be led by therapists.

Iconoclasm

Iconoclasm plays a large role in the configuration of new conceptions of God and in the formation of alternative images of deity. Brock uses iconoclasm when she constructs her christa/community. Nelle Morton wrote and spoke often concerning how indispensable iconoclasm is for bringing forth new and startling realizations. McFague and others have based their theologies on the concept of that which is surprisingly opposite or different from that which we know. Very often, moving to the other side of the pendulum is one way of righting a situation which has been off-balance.

Similarly, iconoclastic techniques, often known as paradoxical techniques in psychotherapy, could also be used in the feminist pastoral counseling model. Women can be encouraged to try something that is radically different from old patterns. Frequently I find that clients will make a tentative suggestion themselves, for a change. Often they barely whisper the idea, either hoping the therapist won't hear or expecting her or him to disapprove. This is often a major moment for transformation.

Ritual

Ritual has been mentioned several times, but it has a crucial role in human transformation, so it must be noted again. Currently feminist liturgies are abounding in the literature from the Wicca traditions, to women-church liturgies, to women's rituals originating in movements all over the world. In the women-church movement, Rosemary Ruether's book has provided both the theory for a community in exodus, and also has given wide readership to women's rituals stemming from Christian traditions.⁵⁴ Liturgy provides a way beyond simple speech, in music, art, poetry and dance, to express our deepest and most powerful experience of life, of God, of the fullness of tragedy and joy. Traditional liturgy has cemented oppression into minority groups'

⁵⁴ Rosemary Ruether, Women-Church (New York: Harper & Row, 1985). See also: Arlene Swidler, ed., Sistercelebrations (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974); Miriam Therese Winter, WomanPrayer, WomanSong (Oak Park, Ill.: Meyer Stone, 1987).

lives through the power of rite, repetition and hierarchy. The question asked by feminist liturgists now is: can liturgy also function to liberate us from oppression?

Women's support groups and therapy groups are banking that the answer is yes. These groups often engage in their own rituals, impromptu or planned some time in advance. One can find a ritual for just about any life event, negative or positive in a woman's life, but often women put together their own or compile them from different sources so they are specific to the event or purpose.

For pastoral counselors to utilize ritual is not new. Elaine Ramshaw, in her book, Ritual and Pastoral Care, connects ritual with pastoral care and three areas: (1) ritual and care for the community, (2) ritual and care for the individual and (3) ritual and care for the world; she calls on pastoral counselors to utilize ritual more than just in the cases of confession or laying on of hands.

In individual therapy, the best way for ritual to be utilized would be for the woman client to define her own need in terms of the ritual and to plan it in conjunction with the pastoral counselor and/or with her community. Rather than an individualized ritual, since ritual is best performed in close community, it would make sense for her to invite a few of her closest friends, for example, or members of her worship community.

Conclusion

It is not within the power of therapy to end oppression. At the same time therapy can be a powerful tool to help women understand their own oppression and make choices again and again not to collude in it. We can minimize the way we internalize oppression and we can learn more about how oppression functions in our own lives, so that those of us who are both oppressors and oppressed, can be aware not to comply with it in oppressing others. Therapy can help make anger explicit and direct and clear, rather than repressed, suppressed, denied or expressed indirectly. Through therapy we can learn something about how to exert power on our own behalf. As Greenspan writes, the idea is to help women redefine and internalize a women-identified, rather than male-identified, sense of being, values and selfhood.⁵⁵

The other goal of therapy, widely described, is "to help a woman see how her own power as an individual is inextricably bound to the collective power of women as a group."⁵⁶ In therapy a woman can begin to explore her own value system and those articulated by other women, such as J.B. Miller, Hoagland and Greenspan, to define feminist values which will help women cease to comply with their own subordination consciously or unconsciously. As women begin

⁵⁵ Greenspan, 203.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 247.

to see themselves through their own eyes, rather than the eyes of patriarchy, something new happens. Part of what she sees may be her own imaginative visualization, part is her hopes and dreams about what could be. It begins, however, with the painful clear-eyed view of the crippling effects of oppression on and in ourselves and on ethnic, racial and minority sexual orientations. We can also see the strengths we possess in spite of the subjugation; often the very strengths and inherent values which have heretofore not been properly valued in culture. As we begin to understand and to value our own selves as women, we can begin to understand the ways in which we collude with the majority in the subjugation of others.

This is not a solitary journey. Our links with other women must be in the foreground of our knowledge and acknowledgments, for as Greenspan has noted, "every therapy is both a personal relationship and a political activity."⁵⁷ In the process we will be outraged and renewed, despairing and hopeful. The transformation of society, after centuries of patriarchy--virtually the only macrosystem humanity has ever known and certainly all women can ever remember or read about--may take much time. This is true for individuals as well, for truly no one is free until we all are free. This is why feminist vision has been called utopian. Nothing less will do for a vision.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 249.

And there is a vision for the individual woman at this time in history. One is described as the "mature woman" by Becker, whose book ends

with a vision of a woman freed from an internalized sense of inadequacy; a woman who is independent, strong yet capable of love, involved in the lives of many but able to be alone and to define boundaries - a "mature woman" who can see herself reflected back to herself through herself, who can work and play, no longer immobilized by the demons her unconscious might harbor, a woman whose invisible dramas have been made visible and have now freed her to become the person she can dream into being.⁵⁸

The values coming from feminist psychology and feminist theology are in agreement: valued are non-oppressive human relationships of equality, mutuality and freedom. Also important is a tolerance of diversity, even a celebration of pluralism. Also valued is the journey itself. More than any perfection inherently suggested as goal by traditional models, the process itself is of value. The direction is toward transformation of self and society: emphasis is placed on the emergence of a new value on "heart" as Brock describes it, on self-possession, on a profound interrelationality and connection, on emergence of creative caring, insight and integrity. Most of all, the journey is a process of coming to consciousness. Of coming awake.

In the process of coming to our own consciousness, we can also come to consciousness of the needs of others and to help organize society so that it permits both the develop-

⁵⁸ Becker, 11.

ment and mutuality of all people. Instead of asking women and men of minority races, ethnic and national backgrounds why they cannot fit into existing societal institutions and structures, we should all be asking how to change those structures so that women and minority men can find a place in them. These are some of the ways feminist theologies and feminist psychology come together to bring forth a vision of newness not only for individuals but also for societies. In such a vision the well-being of all and the justice-making of right-relationship provides the foreground, not the background, of the transformation. Pastoral counseling, like every other facet of ministry, must play its part in bringing forth or actualizing the vision. It certainly cannot, must not, stand in the way. And it can do much to accelerate the process in both its counseling ministry and its justice work in larger communities and the world.

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